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A Qualitative Analysis of African-American High School Students' Transitioning from
Middle School to High School in an Urban Private High School Setting

by

Syreeta R. Holland

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

A Qualitative Analysis of African-American High School Students' Transitioning from
Middle School to High School in an Urban Private High School Setting

by


Syreeta Rena Holland

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education


Dr. Roger "Mitch" Nasser, Dissertation Chair

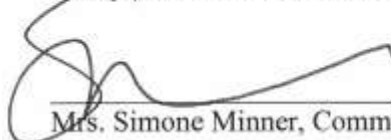
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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Syreeta Rena Holland

Signature: _____



Date: 17 Nov 2017

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Abstract

Research indicated the transition from eighth grade into ninth grade can be a difficult time for students. His Grace High School (HGHS) ninth grade students illustrated this difficulty. The purpose of this study was to examine African American student and parent perceptions regarding the transition process into high school. Currently, all students and parents at HGHS participate in a two-part orientation session to prepare and acclimate to the new school community and learning environments. Orientation sessions are facilitated by predominately African American staff members; however, the premise of the session was developed and implemented by Caucasian staff and faculty. Furthermore, the manner in which the information is developed and shared with the African American students and parents does not consider or address the cultural needs of African American parents and students. Critical Race Theory, CRT, was used to measure inequality in education. According to Hiraldo (1994) scholars have used CRT as a framework to analyze and critique educational research and practices. Critical Race Theory attempts to address the cultural needs and disparities of minority students when compared to students of the dominant race.

The research questions provided additional information about the transition process and how the administration, faculty, staff, and school community can develop and implement a transition program that will assist both students and parents transitioning into HGHS. A qualitative analysis of the current transition process was conducted. Current freshmen students and parents completed surveys and participated in interviews about their experience with the transition process at HGHS.

The results of this study facilitated the development of a transition program that meets the needs of African American students, parents, and community partners. Full development of the program will be a direct result of the information shared by the students and their parents who participated in the study. Finally, this study will positively contribute to the climate of HGHS and will assist with creating a positive culture for African American students, families, and community members.

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Chapter One: Introduction

High school should be an exciting time period for all students. Unfortunately, the transition to a high school environment can often be a tumultuous time for students and parents. “Statistics show that more students fail ninth grade than any other year in school” (Foster, Peterson, & Johnson, 2016, p. 1). Research has shown that although the transition for ninth grade students is difficult, many schools do not fully implement programs and structures to assist students and parents with successfully transitioning into high school while meeting their academic, social, and emotional needs. “In addition, schools rarely collect information about how students, families, and school personnel view the transition periods” (Smith, 2007, p. 1). Most transition programs and orientation sessions are planned and implemented in isolation with building level administration, faculty, and staff. Working with stakeholders to plan and implement an orientation program may assist students with having a seamless transition. “A successful transition program can create a strong bridge between eighth and ninth grade” (Herlihy, 2007, p. 1).

Some transitional programs and/or orientation sessions include only the student and are generic in the information that is addressed. Benner and Graham (2009) shared transition programs in the American educational system are frequent and predictable. In some cases where an orientation session occurs for the parents, the information presented is often generic and only addresses basic information about school personnel, building logistics, attendance, medical concerns/needs and academics. A high school transition program should be developed with the intent of ensuring all students attain success.

Hertzog (2006) shared that it is important for building administration to recognize that no permanent template can be developed for a successful transition program.

The transition process at area high schools historically involved students gathered at the school on a predetermined day, receiving their class schedule, taking photographs for their school identification badges and yearbook, a tour of the school, and the opportunity to meet new grade level peers. "The transition to high school is considered a normative event in the lives of American adolescents, yet normative does not necessarily translate into unproblematic for all students" (Benner & Graham 2009, p. 13). Students transitioning into high school respond differently to the transition process. Furthermore, their needs also differ.

Frequently, students, parents, and educators have shared their concerns about the transition process from eighth to ninth grade and specifically transitioning into His Grace High School (a pseudonym), an urban private school. Research revealed inconsistent results from high school transition studies (Benner and Graham 2009). George (1999) wrote,

I urge the next generation of middle school educators to help save the ninth grade. The middle school concept has too often, not been able to fulfill its announced intention to make the transition to high school a smooth and successful experience. In fact, the transition to high school has never been more treacherous nor the consequences more personally disastrous for so many. All over America thousands and thousands of ninth graders are and have been painfully failing...We can no longer allow

all the good work you do in middle schools to evaporate in the first six weeks of high school. (p. 57)

“There is still much work left to accomplish, and current and future efforts should build on the strengths and address the limitations of existing high school transition studies” (Benner & Graham 2009, p. 13). When a transition plan is implemented, one of its purposes should be to ensure the success of the students. Additionally, its purpose should be to deter students from dropping out of high school. In 2006, Pinkus revealed that 1 out of 2 students are unsuccessful and ultimately drop out of high school. The dropout rate has increased annually in the state of Missouri.

The current transition process at His Grace High School does not address the social and emotional needs of its clients. “It is essential that educators understand how students think and feel as they make the complex transition from elementary to middle to high school” (Smith, 2007, p. 74). Developing a successful transition program should include the input of the students. When students feel they have contributed to the school system, they feel their voices were heard, they are less likely to have a negative overall high school experience. It is integral to ensure that all stakeholders have valuable input into the learning environment which will positively contribute to student success.

“Research has shown that when students take part in transition programs that consists of a variety of articulation activities, significantly fewer freshmen fail and fewer are retained” (Foster et al., 2016, p. 1).

Some current literature has focused on the transition process for students of other ethnic groups and backgrounds. “Although there is a growing body of literature on students’ transition from middle school to high school, much of the literature fails to take

into consideration the distinctive racial and environmental circumstances of African American students” (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007, p. 1). Many times African American students’ perceptions of their educators hamper their ability to progress academically and socially. “It is important for schools to identify unique patterns and develop interventions to reduce the gaps between perceptions and reality in academic transitions” (Smith, 2007, p. 74).

Research has shown that for students to successfully transition from eighth into ninth grade, it is imperative for the school community to work in collaboration with the students and parents to meet their individual cultural needs. “Black students are at a greater risk for academic and social decline during this transition” (Holcomb-McCoy, 2011, p. 1). Moreover, it is essential for the educational community to meet the social and emotional needs of its African American students and parents.

Background of the Study

The researcher explored academic, social, and psychological disruptions experienced by ninth grade African American students as they transitioned from elementary/middle school to an urban private high school. While the general disruption of grade change, and even more so school change, have been studied the particular challenges for African American students, especially in a private sector, have not been explored. “In addition, schools rarely collect information about how students, families, and school personnel view the transition periods” (Smith, 2007, p. 1). When the particular areas of disruption have been identified, and successful strategies documented, educators will be better equipped to assist ninth grade students with a seamless transition into a private urban high school setting.

African American high school students enrolled in an urban private school setting struggle transitioning from the middle school learning environment to a high school learning environment. "Minority students, in particular, seem to be at a greater risk for adjustment and academic difficulties post-transition to high school" (Newman, Meyers, Newman, Lohman, & Smith, 2000, p.47). Without the presence of essential support systems for students, they continue struggling socially, emotionally, and academically. This transitional period is one of the most critical junctures in a student's educational trek. Not only is this a critical transition for the students but also for their parents and families. "I have found that in some cases parents are more worried about their children making this transition than the child is, so any activities that assist to allay the anxiety of the parents will be beneficial" (Dorman, 2012, p. 22).

"Ethnicity plays a huge role in shaping behavior and has been identified as a significant factor in black student achievement" (Lee, Spencer, & Harpalani, 2003, p. 32). Most educational settings are not equipped with educators who resemble African American students. Often time schools are disproportionately represented with African American faculty and staff. Schools should develop and implement structures that address the cultural needs of its students and families. Implementation of structures and programs that address the cultural needs of African Americans will assist with increasing the level of trust between the school and home environments. "As black students transition to high school, they need more positive role models from their cultures within communities and schools" (Holcomb-McCoy, 2011, p. 2). Ascher (1992) brought attention to the lack of African American men in the educational system. At the time of Ascher's research, only 1.2% of educators were African American men (p. 779). Present

numbers of African American representation in the field of education have not grown tremendously. Additionally, the number of positive African American role models depicted in the media is significantly low. Holcomb-McCoy (2007) shared that the images of African Americans in the media are depicted as suffering from substance abuse, unemployed, living in impoverished areas, undereducated, incarcerated, and deceased.

Kunjufu (2003) wrote that the educational journey for African Americans was hampered with legal fights, hostility, hints of subservience, removal, and the constant desire to ponder possibilities within and outside of the public educational systems. Moreover, Kunjufu (2003) also shared that even when African American students meet graduation requirements their level of education is often not equivalent to their Caucasian counterparts. Solomon (1989) shared that schools promote the mindset that African American students will attain their greatest success in the area of athletics as opposed to the area of academics. This mindset gives the educational community the foundation to think that African American students will not be successful in the educational realm when compared to those of different ethnic backgrounds.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct an analysis of academic, social, and emotional disruptions exhibited by African American students that impede their successful transition into the private high school setting. The researcher identified specific structures essential for implementing a ninth grade transition program that assist with improving the overall level of academic, social, and emotional success of students. "A limited number of studies have examined the effect that the transition process has on

the academic adjustment and achievement of minority students, particularly African American students” (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007, p. 253).

A successful ninth grade transition program includes trained educators who are knowledgeable and can assist with building a sense of community, increased parental involvement and social activities, and academic rigor (Mizelle, 2005). The setting for this research was an urban private high school in the Midwest. Approximately 98% of the student body was African American. The students lived within the city limits or commute from surrounding suburban areas. The study’s researcher worked with current freshmen students and their parents to complete surveys and interviews. The interviews and surveys collected data about the transition process and the level of support the students and their parents received as they transitioned from middle to high school.

Rationale

The researcher, who served as a school administrator at the time of the study, perceived a need to develop and implement a program to assist African American students’ transition to the private high school sector. Typically, high schools mandate all incoming ninth grade students participate in an orientation that acclimates the student and parent to the high school learning environment. However, many of the specific academic, social, and emotional needs are not met during this transitional process. “Formal structures for helping students transition smoothly appear to be relatively uncommon, leaving the work to already overburdened counselors and families, or sometimes no one but the students themselves” (Korbey, 2015, p. 1). Furthermore, many of the orientation sessions do not specifically address the myths and concerns of the ninth grade students and parents.

The high school transition process is rarely viewed at from both the parent and student perspective. More often than not, parents are filled with some of the same concerns regarding the high school transition process when compared to their children. Students are excited about the new level of autonomy while parents are concerned with the social and safety aspects of the transition process. Smith (2007) reported parents were significantly more concerned about their child encountering social issues, students being bullied, and experiencing peer pressure. The students also reported lower levels of concerns on these issues and felt optimistic about interfacing with a larger number of older peers according to Smith (2007).

Research Questions

The researcher completed a qualitative study and worked with 25 African-American ninth grade students and their parents to address the following questions:

1. How do students and parents perceive the transition process from eighth grade to high school?
2. How do students and parents feel the school assisted them with the high school transition process?
3. How can students and parents assist the school with the high school transition process?
4. How did the transition process assist with dispelling any myths regarding the transition from eighth grade into high school?

These questions provided information about how current ninth grade students and their families respond to the transition process at an urban private high school. The students and their parents were administered surveys and interviewed. Their responses

served as a guide for the researcher to develop a more successful transition program. The survey and interview questions prompted the students and their parents to examine the current transition process while identifying the academic, social, and emotional challenges they experienced which impeded a smooth transition.

Limitations

Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) stated when a study focuses on relationships, the probability that the data pertaining to the relationship may be a result of the data or explained by other factors. "Researchers who engage in some form of qualitative research are likely to select a purposive sample that is, they select a sample they feel will yield the best understanding of what they are studying" (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 436). When a study involves relationship data there is a possibility that the data pertains to or is impacted by other factors (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

The researcher determined the following factors may pose a threat to the validity and reliability of the findings of the study: (1) The researcher unintentionally displayed bias towards certain interview questions. Hence, objectivity outweighed the researcher's ability to be subjective. When reading the questions to the interviewee, the researcher used minimal expression along with a monotone level to eliminate any bias. The researcher did not receive formal training relating to interviewing skills which could have had an impact on the participant responses. (2) This study occurred over a short time frame. The researcher worked with the participants to establish a rapport which increased the length of the research study. Additional time to complete the research may have afforded an increase in the number of research participants. (3) The study had a limited number of participants which may prevent its replication to further test the validity. The

researcher worked with the research site to solicit additional participants. An increase in the number of research participants may have significantly impacted the results of the study. (4) The responses were limited in authenticity when the students and parents responded to the interview questions about their feelings regarding the high school transition process. The researcher conducted the interviews and administered the surveys in an isolated area.

Definition of Terms

Cultural Congruence - developing a closer fit between a students' home culture and the cultures of the school (Brown, 2007).

Culturally Responsive - a learning style that embeds motivation, environmental, relational, and sensory preferences that influence the learning environment. How to make instructional delivery more congruent with the cultural orientations of students from different ethnic, racial, linguistic, and social backgrounds (Gay, 2010).

Ninth Grade Academies - designed to increase academics and decrease dropout rates by implementing rigorous lessons with a career focus. Academies are typically found in larger schools, have learning communities, incorporate academic and vocational curricula, and have partnerships with community employers (Styron & Peasant, 2010).

Summary

Research has shown that transitioning into high school may be one of the most challenging times in a young adult's life. "At the same time that young adolescents are adapting to hormonally induced physical, emotional, and cognitive changes, they suddenly enter new educational environments that are typically less nurturing, larger, more departmentalized, more competitive, and more demanding academically" (Niesen,

& Wise, 2004, p. 1). On one hand, high school students need opportunities to build new relationships, gather information from valuable and experienced resources, and be embraced by a community that is welcoming and warm. On the other hand, high school parents need to be provided with essential information about the school community while ensuring them that the cultural needs of their child are being met.

This study examined the academic, social, and emotional disruptions of African American students' transitioning into a private high school learning environment. Identification of specific feelings, behaviors, and techniques that impede a seamless transition will afford educators the skills to develop a transition process that will meet the cultural, academic, social, and emotional needs of the students and families. The study utilized a phenomenological perspective to survey and interview African American students and their parents to understand their experience as they transitioned into ninth grade and their response to the transition process.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

Transitioning to high school can be a tempestuous time in the lives of a student. It is imperative the high school environment include stakeholders in the transition process which will assist with addressing the emotional, academic, social, and physiological needs of the students. Ellerbrock and Kiefer (2014) discussed the passage of students from the middle grades to high school is the most difficult transition point in education. "A successful transition program can create a strong bridge between eighth and ninth grade" (Herlihy, 2007, p. 2). The researcher used the review of literature to examine the origin of high schools, Brown versus Board of Education, public schools versus private schools, and high school transition program. The review of literature discussed effectively assisting African American student's transition. "Although there is a growing body of literature on students' transition from middle school to high school, much of the literature fails to take into consideration the distinctive racial and environmental consideration of African American students" (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007, p. 1). The researcher in this study examined whether the high school transition process addressed the needs of African American students and their parents in a private urban school.

According to Newman et al. (2000), minority students are at a greater risk for adjustment and academic difficulties when transitioning into high school environment. Educational administrators should reflect on the cultural needs of the population they serve. In the United States, one out of every three 8th grade students fail to graduate from high school (Orfield, 2004). According to Orfield (2004), approximately half of the minority population fails to graduate from high school. There is a nation-wide concern that educational learning environments have not been designed to promote success while

ensuring high school students graduate. Nationally, high school graduation rates have declined in the public and private school sectors (Colbert, 2013). Exposing students to programs and resources that support positive self-esteem, academic support, and interpersonal relationships skills substantially decreases the chances of a student dropping out of high school. In 2007, Cooper and Liou reported that students who struggle when transitioning into high school typically dropout by the end of the year. In fact, implementation of programs for students that consistently involves all stakeholders, positively impact the number of students who ultimately drop out of high school.

“It is essential that educators understand how students think and feel as they make the complex transitions from elementary to middle to high school” (Smith, 2007, p. 1).

Students transitioning to high school are experiencing life-altering changes.

McCallumore and Sparapani (2010) discussed a student's transition to high school as life-altering as a result of their developmental stage in life and the significant difference between academic and social experiences of middle school versus high school. Students have difficulty moving from a smaller more nurturing learning environment, experience physiological changes, and have an increased desire to be accepted by their peers.

“Transferring to a new school creates a transition period that is frequently marked by declining academic performance, increased absences, and increased behavior disturbances” (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010, p. 449). Smith (2007) shared this transitional period as a time where student's perception of change is in the areas of academic rigor, social interactions, and their level of support.

The school's learning environment and how it addresses change will have an integral impact on student's transition into high school. “Students who make a successful

transition from middle school to high school are better prepared for challenges facing them throughout their high school years” (Langenkamp, 2009, p. 3). This transition is a major event for both students and parents. However, this period can be less stressful when the high school environment responds to the social and academic needs of its stakeholders appropriately. Hertzog (2006) shared no permanent template should be developed. Moreover, the process should continuously include the perspectives of students, classroom educators, and parents in the development of the program.

Isakson and Jarvis (1999) noted a slight drop in adjustment difficulties as students transitioned into the high school learning environment; but their long-term adjustment was directly impacted by the student’s ability to manage and cope in their new environment. Student success decreases without sufficient structures and supports available to students and parents. Additionally, structures and supports must be available for all students and parents. Students who were successful within the previous schools’ learning environment may need the same resources and supports to assist with transitioning.

History of High Schools

Education has not always been a priority in the United States. Watson (2008) described education more than 100 years ago as taking place in homes. However, education only occurred if it was cost effective for families to compensate private tutors according to Watson (2008). Puritans were the first in this country to point out the need for public education. The first public school in America did not evolve until 1821. Prior to 1821, education or schooling was only accessible to boys. Attaining formal education was important to early colonists; but, formal schooling was not widely available.

Education has not always been the focus of Americans. In earlier centuries, education was a culmination of information that colonists shared from their area(s) of origin. This culmination later evolved into what is now known as the American educational system. Public education was provided in a few states. Throughout the nation, civic-minded citizens assisted with the evolution of schools (Leisch, 1994). The classroom educator was challenged to use his or her own knowledge for daily schooling in the earlier centuries.

In the 1600's, education took a back seat to familial and life circumstances. For instance, children were often expected to work on the farm, around their land, etc. as opposed to attending school during the summer months (Leisch, 1994). Life circumstances did not afford many to make education a priority in earlier years. Many familial environments viewed education as a luxury. The more affluent families either hired tutors, sent their children away to tuition schools, or schools in England.

Around the 1830's and 40's, high schools became available in more affluent areas, later expanding at the conclusion of the Civil War. The formation of The Committee of Ten, a working group of educators, was developed in response to the National Education Association's competing academic philosophies being promoted simultaneously (Mirel, 2006). The Committee of Ten recommended that an educational cycle include 12 years of schooling being broken into two cycles. Cycle one involved 8 years of elementary education and the second cycle involved 4 years of education. Furthermore, the Committee of Ten believed that the educational process should incorporate all subjects and be taught throughout the entire cycle. For instance, information should be taught with fidelity throughout all grades with no exception being

made in relation to race, or ethnic background. This mindset moreover rejected the suggestions that high schools should divide students into two segments, college-bound and working trades (Leisch, 1994).

The high school movement evolved between 1910 and 1940. During the 19th century, public support grew for universal education and the belief that schools should serve the poor as well as the wealthy. This resulted in a rapid increase of public high schools in cities and towns. This movement further expanded later in each locality with the establishment of neighborhood, district, or community high schools in the larger cities. Enrollment and graduation rates significantly increased causing additional schools to be built. The focus of these schools was to prepare students for life as opposed to preparing them for college. Many of society's current taboos were non-existent. For instance, the ease of repeating a grade, focusing on practical skills, and preparing students for blue-collar work were accepted. The curricula of these schools shifted from a more practical approach to skill based, according to Leisch (1994).

Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" and Elementary and Secondary Education Act, ESEA, was passed in 1965 (Matthews, 2014). According to Matthews (2014), this act, known today as "Title I funding" forbid the establishment of a national curriculum and provided funding for elementary and secondary education with a large share of impoverished students. ESEA authorized equal access to education while promoting high accountability and standards. Its main focus was to lower the achievement gap between all students while ensuring that all students had access to an equal and fair education. Additionally, ESEA, was designed to provide resources for qualified educators, instructional materials, and educational resources.

Comprehensive high schools became more widespread by the 1950's (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004, p. 1). These schools were designed for students to receive an education for free; and, upon completion of the 12-year cycle, receive a high school diploma. According to Grubb and Lazerson (2004) comprehensive high schools fought to have all youth in a single location, but prepare them for different roles. "Most high school students today attend what are known as public comprehensive schools" (Gamoran, 1996, p. 1). Comprehensive high schools are mandated to admit students from their local area of residence. Schools that promote unity and meet diverse needs at the same time are defined as comprehensive (Gamoran, 1996). A student's ability has no bearing on his or her admittance into a comprehensive high school. Students have the autonomy to identify their courses within a comprehensive high school. Local districts manage comprehensive high schools. Comprehensive schools meet the varied needs of the population they serve.

The U. S. Department of Education reported 10,693 private high schools and 26,407 public high schools in 2001 (as cited in Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2016). In 2007, the Catholic Church and other religious organizations, according to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement, operated more than 1,000 schools ((Buckley & Schneider, 2007, p. 8). A unique subset of secondary education is the charter school system. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement (2004) defined charter schools as:

Underwritten with public funds but run independently, charter schools are free from a range of state laws and district policies stipulating what and how they teach, where they can spend their money, and who they can hire and fire. In

return, they are strictly accountable for their academic and financial performance.

Charter schools are publicly funded and have autonomy to govern their curriculum and governance in exchange for a higher level of accountability. (as cited in Buckley & Schneider, 2007, p. 1).

Home schooling is another setting for secondary education in the United States. The U.S. Department of Education defined home schooling as educating a child in a home environment rather than sending them to school (Redford et al., 2016). "In the spring of 1999, an estimated 850,000 students nationwide were being homeschooled" (Buckley & Schneider, 2007, p. 18). In 1999, four out of five students were homeschooled. Additionally, one out of five students were being homeschooled were also enrolled in public or private schools part time (Redford et al., 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Education in 2004, there were more than 2 million school-aged children being educated at home (Redford et al., 2016).

The Impact of Brown versus Board of Education

A pivotal moment in the history of education occurred in 1954 with racial desegregation of children in public schools due to the Brown versus Board of Education ruling. "Prior to the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education, the law held that the Constitution was satisfied by racially segregated schooling facilities as long as they were considered 'equal'" (Admin, 2013). This ruling spearheaded change in how public schools educated African American students. Prior to the ruling, African American students were not afforded the same educational experiences as their Caucasian American counterparts. African American students did not have access to many of the resources and opportunities; and, African American students were placed in lower

educational tracks, which made them ill equipped to contend educationally with their peers. Woodson (1933) further explained the importance of understanding education for African-American students:

How we have arrived at the present state of affairs can be understood only studying the forces effective in the development of Negro education since it was systematically undertaken immediately after emancipation. To point out merely the defects as they appear today will be of little benefit to the present and future generations. These things must be viewed in their historical setting. The conditions of today have been determined by what has taken place in the past, and in a careful study of this history we may see more clearly the great theatre of events in which the Negro has played a part. We may understand better what his role has been and how well he has functioned in it. (p. 9)

Prior to the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, the classroom and school learning environments were not equal to those for Caucasian students. "Course materials were dated, extracurricular non-existent, and teachers were often under-qualified or spread too thin across too many students to be effective" (Education news, 2013, para. 12). "African Americans have been subjected to inequality in educational opportunity for more than 100 years" (Codrington, 2012, p. 4).

According to Saddler (2005), many of the current trends in educating African American students must consider the history of education and the maltreatment of African American students in the educational system. "The problem of educating Black children in America is as old as the presence of Blacks within this country" (Saddler,

2005, p. 41). Notable scholars such as Dr. Janice Hale, Marcus Garvey, and Dr. Carter Woodson have expressed their concerns regarding the miseducation of African Americans. "After a long struggle, and through a carefully thought out strategy, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) Thurgood Marshall successfully argued that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (Education news, 2013, para. 13). "The Brown decision created racial aspiration that remain unrealized" (Carson, 2004, p. 27). In the field of education, great strides have been made. However, the current state of education continues to exhibit patterns that segregation within the field of education has not been fully eradicated.

Unfortunately, the rate at which African Americans are often placed in underachieving educational tracks further reiterates the societal impressions that they do not deserve an adequate education when compared to their peers of other ethnic groups. One societal answer to social inequality is apparent in the educational system. "Oftentimes, racism is ingrained into systemic structures (e.g. schooling) and must be unveiled layer by layer" (Saddler, 2005, p. 42). Many African American students are being educated in underprivileged learning environments. Carson (2004) suggested that Brown versus the Board of Education inability to address the concerns of the majority of African American students who have been unable or unwilling to seek better educational opportunities by leaving predominately Black schools for predominantly White ones further supports the disproportionality of resources for many urban schools serving African American students. The resources and materials available to students in urban districts or those serving primarily African American students are frequently not up to

standards. Typically, the curriculum, materials, and supplies are not current and the classroom educator has a minimal amount of control over updating them.

Often times the educators working with African American students have a social disconnect which significantly hampers their ability to empathize with an African American child and hinders their capability to present information in a manner in which the student can relate. "Too often, Black children suffer in schools because school staff, who have the power to label, classify, and define, do not always have our children's best interest at heart" (Saddler, 2005, p. 43). Over the years the number of African Americans in the field of education has increased. However, there is still a significantly lower number of African American educators in schools when compared to their Caucasian colleagues.

Saddler (2005) discussed Critical Race Theory (CRT) to dissect the societal structures and how it impacts the education of African Americans. CRT has three themes. One of the three CRT themes suggested that racism is a part of American society. Delgado (1995) shared "that this theme calls attention to the reality that racism is a normal daily fact of life in society and that the dogmatic assumptions of racism are so deeply ingrained in the political and legal structures as to be almost unrecognizable" (as cited in Saddler, 2005, p. 42). More often than not, researchers find that racism is engrained in systemic societal structures such as school systems (Saddler, 2005).

Public Schools versus Private Schools

Research showed there are integral factors that must be considered when making a final decision of where a child should attend school. Chen (2015) shared when looking at a public versus private school, the following factors should be considered: costs,

school and class size, location, academic reputation and college preparation, safety, special programs, ideology, and religious and moral instruction. The first important factor is cost. "For many parents, this (cost) is the hardest factor with which to come to terms" (Chen, 2015, p. 3). At times, parents and families may identify a school which may seem appropriate for the student, however, the tuition cost and additional applicable fees may not be aligned with the parent's financial circumstances.

School and class size is the second factor that is considered when deciding on a public versus private school. Large class size is often a deterrent for many families. Larger schools and classes according to research are more challenging to administer while implementing programs that will ensure academic success for all students (Chen, 2015). Location is a third factor for parents to ponder. Several private schools do not offer transportation for its students. Hence, parents need to consider if the location is feasible (Chen, 2015). Professional and personal schedules are integral factors in school selection. Parents should consider these factors to ensure availability in case of an emergency as well as for day to day school attendance.

"Public schools offer a general program, designed for all" (Chen, 2015, p. 4). Researchers believe that education is one key to success. State and/or public schools have to implement academic material and information that is in accordance with state guidelines and regulations. "In most states, learning is measured by standardized test" (Chen, 2015, p. 4). Moreover, charter and/or private schools must implement academic material and information that is in accordance with their governing or founding body. "These schools are public but offer specialized programs and smaller classes and are

governed by a board of directors (usually consisting of parents and community members)” (Chen, 2015, p. 5).

“Black students are systemically underserved in America's public schools” (Denbo & Beulieu, 2002, p. 22). African American students who are educated within the public school systems are subjected to underachievement, lack access to educational resources, and have an increased risk of being identified as a student with special needs. Gilbert and Gay (1985) reported the general education learning environment was not effectively meeting the needs of African American students; and, they were historically misplaced and misdiagnosed. According to the National Center for Statistics (2009) African American students' level of academic achievement is significantly lower when disaggregating standardized assessment scores, dropout rates, high school graduation, college enrollment, and college graduation than their Caucasian peers.

Public schools are usually divided into three segments. The first segment is elementary school, which comprise of grades kindergarten through fifth or sixth. Middle schools include grades sixth through eighth. Finally, public high schools include grades ninth through 12th. Private schools are logistically set up differently when compared to public schools. They are divided into two segments. Elementary/middle schools include grades kindergarten through eighth and high schools include ninth through 12th.

High Schools in an Urban Setting

“For many Americans, the term urban school evokes an image of a dilapidated school building in a poor inner-city neighborhood populated with African-American or Hispanic children” (Jacob, 2007, p. 130). Urban schools are historically located in larger cities plagued with crime and poverty. These schools can be full of students from middle

to low socio-economic statuses, troubled familial backgrounds, reside within high crime areas and plagued with academic challenges. "Economic conditions, the nature of the neighborhood, family and extended family relationships, and the school environment all influence a child's academic motivation and achievement" (Newman et al, 2000, p. 47). Academic motivation and achievement are negatively impacted when a student is overwhelmed with familial stressors and concerns. For instance, when a child is consumed with poverty, the effect can be hazardous to their level of academic achievement and success. Furthermore, living in an impoverished area may hinder proper health and appropriate nutrition.

Students in urban schools are typically challenged with a high mobility rate and urban schools struggle to attain and retain highly qualified faculty and staff. Classroom educators should accept their role concerning the potential positive impact they can have on the lives of the children they serve. According to Jacob (2007), teachers play a critical role in schooling, particularly urban settings when support from families is minimal. Newman et al. (2000) reported students found many high school teachers unsupportive. High mobility rates and lack of qualified staff historically have had a negative impact on the level of academic achievement for students.

Public education consistently reports that some schools in urban areas with student populations who live in poverty are unsuccessful. For years America has known that public education is not making the mark. In response to this phenomenon, school reformers are attempting to identify quick fixes in an effort to change the state of education. School reformers "have proposed everything from new curricula to smaller class sizes to hiring more qualified teachers" (Klein, 2007, p. 1).

In spite of the significant number of instances of schools that continually foster the cycle of poverty, there are some schools that exist which are assisting with the rebirth of the community it serves while producing highly educated student scholars. “Urban schools must work in partnerships with families to build supportive and nurturing, yet challenging learning environments that help students transition into high school, college, and beyond with ease” (Christie & Zint, 2016, p. 2).

According to Christie and Zint (2016), urban schools must place their focus on “over-determining success”. Christie and Zint (2016) defined over-determining success as developing and exposing students to experiences, activities, and programs that increase academic success and college awareness. These experiences, activities, and programs when combined have a positive effect on the level of student achievement. The focus of these activities includes mentoring, accessing technology, and social and cultural skill enrichment.

Transition to High School

An effective transition program should focus on ensuring that all stakeholders encounter a safe and warm environment while communicating with the middle school learning environment to remain in tune with the needs of the students and parents. “While the transition from middle to high school symbolically represents the coming of age, it is a time in a young person’s life that can create feelings of disconnection, and immeasurable” (Cooper & Liou, 2007, p. 43). Students in transition are experiencing a plethora of emotions as they move from a smaller more structured environment elementary/middle school learning environment. Mizelle and Irvin (2000) shared during high school transition, students move into a more competitive, larger, grade oriented

environment when compared to that of middle school. Additionally, parents of transitioning students are experiencing a litany of emotions which may hamper their ability to fully assist their child with smoothly transitioning into the high school environment.

Currently, many transition programs are faced with the challenge of individually meeting the needs of the students and parents. During the transition process, students and parents complete a short program with the expectation that after completion of the process they will immediately conform to the new learning environment (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). Participation and completion of these programs do not fully address concerns of larger class sizes, academic rigor, autonomy, and greater access to extra-curricular activities.

The number of students in a high school learning environment is typically greater when compared to the number of students in an elementary/middle school. Another comparison of the two environments is that students do not move from class to class. In the elementary/middle school setting, students are only exposed to one classroom educator who is responsible for delivering instructional information for all core subject areas while staying in the same learning environment.

According to Lampert (2005) schools should have small ninth grade academies. Ninth grade academies are provided to students throughout their first year of high school. Within the ninth grade academies, students are divided into groups and assigned an interdisciplinary team of educators who collaborate to meet the needs of freshmen students. Educators should address study skills along with stress and time management

in the ninth grade academies. Focusing on these skills will assist students with a smoother high school transition.

Academic rigor is another difference between elementary/middle school when compared to high school. "One of the biggest challenges when moving from middle school to high school is the focus often shifts from teaching and nurturing the whole child to focusing—in a more limited way—on instructing students to learn the content of academic subjects" (Herlihy, 2007, p. 19). High school educators are charged with meeting grade level expectations which are aligned with state standards. These standards typically guide the level of instruction for educators and their students. Additionally, high school educators are often pressured to provide a certain level of instruction at a certain pace which impacts the level of academic rigor and student achievement. This level of rigor may not be conducive for students who struggle academically and socially. Moreover, Herlihy (2007) shared this level of rigor may be difficult for those who are unable to advocate for their personal educational needs.

The level of structure in high school is minimal compared to elementary/middle school. Changes in school culture spikes different emotions from students. Being in a larger and more diversified educational setting with limited connections may incite feelings of isolation (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). Students may feel less support as they work to gain interpersonal relationships with their classroom educators.

Anfara and Schmid (2007) revealed that studies of resiliency in childhood identify a strong sense of belonging as key to effective coping and the confidence that disruptions in life will be resolved. Students who experience difficulty transitioning may lack connectedness to the school environments. School connectedness, according to Osterman

(2000), is linked to academic achievement, level of participation in school activities, and social and personal outlook. Studies have shown that the more involved a student is in the school environment, the less likely they will encounter difficulty during the transition process. It is important that school personnel recognize the impact that social support has on students who are struggling. Implementing an array of activities and programs will meet the social and academic needs of students as they transition. "Issues of disconnectedness may be exacerbated for poor and minority students" (Anfara & Schmid, 2007, p. 62). Hence, it is imperative that school environments employ educators who can create and maintain a positive rapport with students.

Transition Programs

"Many teachers, parents, and administrators think of transition as a one-day "orientation" or school tour to locate locker rooms and gym facilities even though students' needs are long-term and comprehensive" (Dedmond, Brown,, & LaFauci, 2006, p. 43). A successful transition program fills a void by ensuring that parents and students have information concerning differences between middle and high school. Mizelle and Irvin (2000) suggested that when parents are involved in the transition process, their level of involvement has a tendency to remain the same while their child finishes high school. An increased and consistent level of parental involvement is often a catalyst for students to excel academically. Students have a tendency to decrease their level of negative behaviors and increase attention to academics when parents are involved. "The degree of parental interest and participation in school and related events, and the extent to which parents supplement the learning process with educational activities is a major factor in the success of students transitioning from middle to high school" (Queen, 2002, p. 1).

The high school transition process does not occur overnight and is a critical period in the development of an adolescent. Students and parents should begin the transition process at the onset of their eighth grade year. Involving them in this process earlier should make the transition smoother. "All students need comprehensive long-term programs to help them succeed in high school and beyond" (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007, p. 24). According to Cooney and Bottoms (2002), if society continues with its present transition system, students will continue to struggle graduating from high school and not be adequately prepared.

The best transition programs should include an array of activities. "Effective transition programs typically are defined as ones that improve student attendance, achievement, and retention" (Savage, 2002, p. 3). Some of the activities of an effective transition program should include school visits, academic preparation, counseling, and a unique summer program according to Savage (2002).

Second, effective school transition should entail structured and directed activities that encompass the needs of students, parents, and classroom educators. Since all stakeholders are an important circle of support for students and the school environment, all parties should be knowledgeable of the transition and its respective process. All of the students and parent concerns are centered on academic rigor and relationships. Savage (2002) shared it is imperative that the transition program address those concerns of both the parents and the students.

Next, an effective transition program should involve stakeholders from both grade levels. Ongoing, transparent, and consistent communication should be focused on the expectations of students. Finally, Anderson (2006) elaborated that effective transition

programs should cater to those subcategories who are most likely going to struggle in the school environment. Girls, students with behavior problems, low achievers, minorities, and students living in low socioeconomic status are likely to encounter difficulty with systemic transitions. Anderson (2006) indicated that girls struggle more as a result of their strong desire to attain positive peer relationships. "Transition programs must consistently ask students to reflect on freshman experiences, including social, academic, and emotional" (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000, p. 1). Building administration should also consider a flexible model when developing an effective transition program. An integral component to implementing a successful transition program is usage of great resources which address the needs of students and parents. For years, transition programs have been developed and implemented in isolation from students and parents. Maute and Brough (2002) stated,

The journey does not begin when the first bell rings on the first day, and it is not over when the last bell rings on the last day. Rather than simply handing off students to the high school at the end of their middle level journey, educators must help them embrace the experience as the next best steps for their future. (p. 19)

Mizelle and Irvin (2000) reported parents who are involved in the education of their children lead to better attendance, increased success of academic achievement, positive behaviors and attitudes, and higher test scores.

An educational leader, faculty, and staff's goal is to assist students with making a smooth transition and institute structures that connect families to the schools. "Parental involvement in the transition process contributes to and impacts ninth grade

achievement” (Akos & Galassi, 2004, p. 215). Involved parents are often on one accord with the school and learning environment. When parents are informed they can assist classroom educators with ensuring that students remain on track. “Secondary school leaders who want to positively influence the performance of all students, especially those who typically struggle, can implement systems and processes that connect families with schools to advance the achievement of all students” (Costantino, 2007, p. 36).

African-American Students' Transition to High School

“Black children suffer in schools because school staff, who have the power to label, classify, and define, do not always have our children’s best interest at heart” (Saddler, 2005, p. 43). Research has shown that educators of different ethnic groups from their students are prone to notice their students’ behavioral challenges, quick to classify them as having special needs, fail to foster relationships and struggle to relate to the cultural backgrounds of their students. “Black students, even if they attend schools with Whites, receive an education that is different and inferior” (Saddler, 2005, p. 44).

Research has indicated Black students, males in particular, are labeled with an educational diagnosis three times more when compared to their White counterparts (Saddler, 2005). Furthermore, there is an increase in the number of Black students enrolled in less rigorous courses and vocational programs. “Today, we can argue that African American youth are not only mis-educated but actually ‘de-educated’” (Saddler, 2005, p. 44). “De-educated” was defined by Saddler (2005) as African American students who are eliminated strategically from the educational system and/or strategically being destroyed within the educational system. Cauley and Jovanovich (2006) discussed how classroom educators’ dependence on stereotypes of African Americans’ causes them

to be at a disadvantage. Monroe and Obidiah (2004) stated that due to the low number of African American classroom educators present within the educational system, the probability of African American students being educated by those who are not familiar with their cultural background and uphold negative beliefs and stereotypes regarding the increases.

Anfara and Schmid (2007) identified areas of concern for Black students which impede a successful transition into high school. The four identified areas of concern were lack of positive role models, a lack of connection between the home and school environments, identity exploration, and stereotyping from members of the educational community.

Exposure to positive role models is a significant area of concern for African American youth. School systems would benefit from creating and implementing opportunities that encourage and empower students to attain academic success. Many school systems currently consistently struggle to identify and secure African American educators who can relate to the culture of the school and its students.

High school students struggle with identity exploration. During high school, student interactions and level of acceptance among their peers is paramount. This vital transition for young adolescents unfortunately disrupts their friendship networks and can have a significant negative impact on the transition process. Anfara and Schmid (2007) stated that during high school transition, students need to feel a sense of belonging. Moreover, Mizelle and Irvin (2000) shared that many students develop a more negative view of themselves when transitioning into high school. This negative view of

themselves can also catapult into feelings of incompetency regarding their ability to handle the social and academic demands of the high school learning environment.

Cultural congruence is integral for African American families to experience a smooth transition into the high school learning environment. Within the educational setting, educators from different ethnic groups struggle when attempting to identify and relate to African American families.

Stereotyping from members of the educational community is a final area of concern. African American students' educational experiences are different when compared to their peers of other ethnic backgrounds. "The limited research in this area suggests that these students face particular vulnerabilities beyond the normal challenges as they start high school" (Benner & Graham, 2009, p. 368). School communities must strive to implement transition programs and structures that are responsive to the diverse cultural needs of African American students and families.

"It's not uncommon for black students and families to distrust schools and school personnel, finding their schools uninviting or unfriendly to their culture and its strengths" (Holcomb-McCoy, 2011, p. 2). African American families feel, in some cases, that their parenting styles and familial values are prejudged which encourage labeling of their children by the educational community. "As a result of this cultural disconnect, many black students experience school differently than students from cultures more connected with the school milieu" (Holcomb-McCoy, 2011, p. 2). When this disconnect occurs, students feel devalued and educators have lower standards and expectations for them and their level of success. Moreover, this disconnect is a social disservice to African American students and families which in turn perpetuates the concept of social

inequalities that currently exist between African Americans and Caucasians. According to Holcomb-McCoy (2011), a school's lack of cultural insensitivity or cultural congruence with minority students and their families can have a negative influence on the transition process.

Parents should be concerned with their child's academic, social, and emotional progress when transitioning into high school. "I have found that in some cases parents are more concerned about their children making this transition than the child is" (Dorman, 2012, p. 22). A high level of parental involvement is imperative for a smoother transition. A lack of parental involvement perpetuates the difficult transition into high school. Dorman (2012) indicated that no matter what level of parental involvement is present, it is imperative that procedures are in place to assist with the dissemination of information concerning transition. While an increased level of parental involvement will ultimately decrease the level of distrust, afford parents opportunities to be in tune when a problem arises, and assist with maintaining effective communication. Consistent and effective communication between home and school environments will ensure that all stakeholders are on one accord. If the school environment works to maintain open lines of communication with African American parents this will ensure that essential information concerning the transition process is shared. "A transition plan that includes parent, middle school staff, high school staff, and administration can ensure that ninth grade students are less likely to drop out and are more likely to succeed" (Dorman, 2012, p. 25). Hence, these efforts will positively contribute to a smoother transition process.

Identity exploration is a huge segment of an adolescent's development. This initial exploration typically begins for adolescents when they are in middle school.

However, the process of exploration continues into high school. During this time period, adolescents get better acquainted with themselves while comparing themselves to their peers. High school is a period of life where seeking the approval of their peers is paramount and has a significant bearing on who they are as a person and how they further develop.

Developing and implementing a plan that will address some of the challenges students and their parents face during this transitional period may be a catalyst to smoothly transitioning into the high school learning environment. Advantageous transition programs are multi-dimensional and include activities regarding cognitive challenges, cultural and social support, and caring relationships. “When this type (transition) of course continues throughout high school, it is extremely beneficial and would increase the chance of improving outcomes” (www.freshmantransition.org, 2016). In 2001, Holland and Mazzoli discussed that students needed more direction in the areas of why school is important, life skills, and mentoring. Mentoring entails partnering students with older peers. Throughout the mentoring process, students have opportunities to build relationships while using their peer as a resource to navigate through the educational system.

Research revealed student transitions could be challenging for students and families due to moving into a new physical location while losing the long-established support systems from elementary school. “Although many districts offer programs designed to familiarize students with the similarities and differences in the academic, social, and organizational structures of the schools, there is little evidence of coordination or consistency in program goals” (Smith, 2007, p. 1). This transitional plan should

include all stakeholders to ensure that the educational, social, emotional, needs of the students and parents are met. When developing the plan, building administrators should use input and information from current students, parents, faculty and staff, and alum. Finally, the program should include resources that will assist the student and parent with the transition process.

The initial emotional response of an eighth grade student transitioning into ninth grade includes a feeling of excitement. Additionally, they experience feelings of fear and anxiety. Mizelle and Irvin (2000) reported that their level of excitement is directly related to the potentiality of new friendships and more choice. The fear and anxiety that students feel is a result of thoughts of getting lost, teased, and failing academically. "They are concerned that high school teachers will give them much more and harder work than they had in middle school" (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000, p. 2).

In today's current educational system, it is difficult to find educators who are African American; and, have the ability to relate to the life challenges their students face. "Interestingly, some researchers have found that African American students are punished or reprimanded for behaviors that are not intended to be disruptive" (Obidah & Monroe, 2004, p. 278). One response to this is culturally responsive education. "The presence of culturally responsive teachers enables students to interact with educators who understand, rather than denigrate, their cultural backgrounds" (Obidah & Monroe, 2004, p. 263). Anfara and Schmid (2007) identified areas of concern for black students, which impede their transition into high school being successful. The four identified areas of concern were lack of positive role models, a lack of connection between the home and school

environments, identity exploration, and stereotyping from members of the educational community.

Culturally responsive education is an approach that institutes elements of the student's home, community, and personal life in the learning environment. Research has shown that African American students are more successful when the learning environment mirrors the home and community environments. "Although there is a growing body of literature on students' transition from middle school to high school, much of the literature fails to take into consideration the distinctive racial and environmental circumstances of African American students" (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007, p. 1).

Successful transition programs incorporate opportunities for students and parents to be transparent in their discussion of their experiences while collaborating with the middle school(s). This act is usually in the form of a panel. Question development prior to the panel discussion may help foster open and honest dialogue. Prior to the panel discussion, the school should encourage panel participants to be as transparent as possible without disclosing a significant amount of negative or presumptuous information.

Exposure to positive role models is a significant area of concern for African American youth. Implementing processes within a school system that create opportunities which will encourage and empower students to attain academic success can be an asset to African American students. Many school systems consistently struggle to identify and secure African American educators who too can relate to the culture of the school and its students.

Summary

The review of literature indicated transition programs are important. However, more often than not, educational and transitional programs do not address the needs of African American students and parents. This study will add to the current body of knowledge about assisting African American students with transitioning into an urban private high school.

Helping students transition into high school has been an ongoing concern in the field of education. Kinney (1993) stated that transitions from elementary school to middle level school to high school are major stepping-stones in the lives of young adolescents and their parents. High school learning environments should have a positive impact on school transition by involving students and families in the process prior to the completion of middle school. "Educators need to understand that articulating young adolescents' transition into high school involves the total middle school program as well as specific articulation practices at the time of the transition" (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000, p. 5). Including all stakeholders in the transition process will address concerns and perceptions as students enter into high school. The researcher's review of literature examined the history of high schools, Brown versus the Board of Education, public versus private high school, high school in an urban setting, African American transition to high school, and effective transition programs.

This study analyzed African American freshmen transitioning into an urban private school. The researcher reviewed results of student and parent, surveys and interviews regarding the current transition process. Their responses were integral to the development of a successful transition program. More specifically, their input may help

HGHS meet the needs of African American students' and families' as they matriculate through the high school transition process. Chapter Three will detail the methodology of the study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The review of literature included a number of studies and information on high school transition. The purpose of this study was to attain additional information about high school transition programs that meet the needs of African American students and their parents as they transitioned into the high school learning environment. The researcher, who was a school administrator, recognized the significant challenges that African American students and their parents faced while transitioning into high school. This study examined African American student and parent perceptions of the transition process in an urban private high school. Transition for the purpose of this study, was defined as being promoted from elementary/middle to high school.

A qualitative research method was performed to collect data pertaining to the students' and parents' perceptions while they transitioned into the high school learning environment. The researcher's questions guided the data collection using four research questions. The data collected from student and parent surveys and interviews were used to assess the effectiveness of the transition program. The results were essential to developing and implementing a program that meets the needs of African-American students and their parents who are transitioning into the high school learning environment.

Many schools and districts implement transition programs for incoming ninth grade students and their parents. Sadly, these programs do not always meet the needs of the population. This study allowed the researcher to review student and parent perceptions of the transition program at His Grace High School (HGHS). The data collected was an integral piece to the development and implementation of a successful

high school transition process for African American students in an urban private high school.

The Research Site

The research was conducted during the 2016-17 school year at His Grace High School (a pseudonym used for the purpose of this study). HGHS is a co-educational secondary school that has been in its current location since the early 2000's. Its current student population is 300 students. Although HGHS is a private urban catholic school, its student body is comprised of students from various religious affiliations. HGHS also has students who have met the academic, attendance, and behavioral criteria for admission. HGHS has a 98% African American student population.

HGHS provides quality high school postsecondary educational opportunities to low-income minority students, enabling them to succeed in high school, college, and career. Furthermore, its student population is comprised of traditional and non-traditional college bound students. HGHS's faculty and staff's definition of a traditional college bound student is one who no matter what learning environment he/she is placed they will be successful. Additionally, they require a minimum amount of educational, social, and emotional support. Moreover, he/she will remain on track to graduate from high school in the expected time, while maintaining an above average ACT score, secure scholarships to attend four-year universities, and contribute positively to the school and learning environment at HGHS. HGHS's faculty and staff's definition of a non-traditional college bound student is one who historically encounters a significant number of challenges. He/she may have been accepted and admitted on a probationary status. While enrolled he/she may have a number of academic, emotional, and behavioral challenges that

negatively influence their level of achievement. Lastly, he/she will finish within the four-year timeframe; however, there will be a significant amount of supports and structures in place. Students who attend HGHS reside in areas that encompass the entire St. Louis Metro region. As many as 50 different public, parochial, charter, and private schools are affiliated with the student body. His Grace High School has students who derive from an array of educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Their status range from those who are financially able to pay full tuition to those who receive tuition assistance.

According to its current administration, HGHS' school mission of academic development, faith development, and leadership assists with ensuring that the graduates are successful and capable of serving their global communities. When compared to many of the high schools in the surrounding areas and across the state, the required number of graduation credits for HGHS students exceeds the neighboring school and minimum state requirements. The high school graduation rate of HGHS neighboring school district is less than 50%; whereas the graduation rate of HGHS is more than 95%. All students who attend HGHS share a common goal of graduating from high school, completing college, contributing positively to their communities.

HGHS believes strongly that education is the key to creating transformative, long-term change. They provide an exceptional, life-changing educational environment that empowers students. The school's mission is to provide students with an exceptional Catholic educational experience that instills attitudes of self-worth and success through faith development, academic excellence, and leadership.

Although His Grace High School only retains less than less than 1% of its student population, a significant number of the students in the ninth grade experience a large

number of academic and behavioral challenges. According to Witherspoon (2010, p. 32), out of every 1,000 African American students, 104 will drop out of high school (p. 32). In the event a student continues most of their ninth grade career exhibiting academic and behavioral challenges, the school intervenes and requires the steps to be implemented prior to beginning their 10th grade year. Unfortunately for some students, these interventions are not sufficient enough to curtail them from failing their first year of high school. As a result of the failing students, the researcher felt compelled to develop a transition program that could potentially positively impact with increasing the number of challenged students when transitioning to high school. Adams (2008), shared it is essential to implement a successful program that will intervene in the transition process.

History of HGHS Transition Programs

The orientation session for HGHS was developed in collaboration with building administration while using a template of activities from previous orientation sessions. The building administration at the time of the study entailed a President, Principal, and an Assistant Principal. One orientation session for the students and parents is typically scheduled prior to the onset of the upcoming school year. Orientation for incoming ninth grade students and parents at HGHS is a part of the school's tradition. The orientation program included a brief welcome from the President and Building Principal, the Dean of Students reviewed school rules, students received information about healthy interactions with peers and adults within the school environment, and lastly, they would receive their course schedules and complete a building tour.

The orientation for the students was approximately 3 hours in length. During orientation, the students initially heard information from the school's administrative

team. After information was shared by the Principal, the President addressed the students. Before being divided into gender specific groups, the students listened to information from the Assistant Principal. While in gender specific groups, they were provided information about safe touch and healthy relationship building. Both of these presentations were a requirement of the school's governing body. Next, the students were given the internet and technology policy and received their Chromebooks. Finally, the students took a tour of the building, and identified their classes and assigned lockers.

Students and parents were orientated during different sessions. However, the students were invited to accompany their parent to their orientation session. Students who attended the parent orientation session with their parent was given an incentive for coming.

HGHS's orientation session for the parents afforded them a greater in-depth view into a private high school. The parents were greeted by the school's President. Next, the parents were informed of her expectations while the students were encouraged to get involved in extracurricular activities as the next four years could potentially be a blur. Finally, the remaining members of the administrative team welcomed the parents and explicitly reviewed curriculum goals, building level expectations, and responded to questions and/or concerns

Research Questions

To assist the researcher with attaining a clearer understanding of the students and parents who were transitioning into high school, the researcher asked the following questions:

1. How do students and parents perceive the transition process from eighth grade to high school?
2. How do students and parents feel the school assisted them with the high school transition process?
3. How can students and parents assist the school with the high school transition process?
4. How did the process assist with dispelling any myths regarding the transition from eighth into high school?

Research Design and Procedures

The research design used for this study was qualitative. Creswell (2013) defined qualitative research designs as non-numeric data that is based on perception and analysis. Common themes emerged when collected data from interactions with research subjects was analyzed. Although transition from middle school to high school has been previously examined, the perceptions of African American students and parents have not been examined specifically within an urban private school. Phenomenological research was used to examine the perceptions of the research participants.

A phenomenological research is defined as analyzing the nature of a person's lived experiences around a specific phenomenon. Christensen, Johnson, and Turner (2010) suggested that phenomenologist attempt to comprehend through the perspective of the participants' human behavior. However, the most common data collection used in a phenomenological study is interviews. Moreover, phenomenological studies collect data using narratives, written reports, poetry, or artistic expression (Christensen et al., 2010). The phenomenon in this study was the perception of African American students and

parents as they transitioned into a private urban high school. Phenomenological methodology guides this study and allowed student experiences to speak for themselves.

The Institutional Review Board approval was required prior to beginning the data collection process. Consent for the study was obtained by the researcher from the research site with specific guidelines. Next, consent for the study was gained, and an assembly was held with the current class of ninth grade students. Students who opted to participate in the research study were invited to accompany their parent to an informational meeting. The purpose of the study was explained during the meeting and the students and parents were given an opportunity to opt out of participation. Anonymity of the participants, parental consent for participation in the study, and parental assent from the parents of the students were explained as well. Each participant assigned themselves a pseudonym which would be used when completing the surveys and interviews, and when reporting the results of the study.

The researcher surveyed and interviewed all participants who consented to the study. Creswell (2013) shared sample size in phenomenological studies ranges from 1 and 325 participants. This study included 25 participants, 17 students, and 8 parents. Some of the student participants were given consent by their parent to participate. However, 9 parents opted to not participate.

The researcher conducted surveys and interviews during the academic school day. Interview questions were open-ended which allowed for the students and parents to be more transparent in their responses. Parent surveys and interviews were conducted at an agreed location or via phone. According to Yin (2001), conducting interviews at an agreed upon location establishes comfort and convenience for the participants. The

researcher reflected upon their own values, actions, and perceptions which may have had an impact upon the research setting, data collection, and analysis.

Reflexivity

According to Berger (2013), reflexivity has been recognized as a crucial strategy in the process of generating knowledge by means of qualitative research. Self-appraisal must be a part of research.

It means turning off the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognize and take responsibility for one's own situation within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions, being asked, data being collected and its interpretation. (Berger, 2013, p. 220)

Furthermore, the researcher's position regarding personal characteristics, race, gender affiliation, biases, preferences, etc. may have an impact on the outcome of the research.

Reflexivity in research may influence the researcher's position and may impact the results of the research in the following ways: access to the "field", shaping the nature of the relationship, and constructs of the world. Berger (2013) shared that research participants may be more willing to share information with a researcher whom is sympathetic to their situation. This mindset is fostered by the belief that the researcher is more knowledgeable and may possess the ability to share and have access to useful resources. Next, the level of comfort in the relationship too may have a positive impact on the results of the study. For instance, "a woman may feel more comfortable discussing sexual experiences with another woman than with a man" (Berger, 2013, p.220). Kacen and Chaitin (2006) wrote the world view and background of the researcher affect the way in which one constructs the world, uses language, poses

questions, and chooses the lens for filtering the information obtained from the participants and deciphering the meaning of the information which may ultimately impact the study's conclusion.

“Reflexivity is crucial throughout all phases of the research process, including the formulation of a research question, collection and analysis of data, and drawing conclusions” (Berger, 2013, p. 221). When questioning research participants, the researcher is self-reflective when composing questions that may illicit a personal response. Additionally, when disaggregating data and the results of the study, it aids unconscious editing. Unconscious editing according to Berger (2013) is defined as sensitivities that enable fuller engagement with the data that leads to a more in-depth analysis. Pillow (2003) further explained the approach:

Relative to the contribution of reflexivity to keeping the process of research ethical, reflexivity is situating the researcher as non-exploitative and compassionate toward the research subjects', thus helping to address concerns regarding negative effects of power in researcher-researched relationships. Reflexivity helps maintain the ethics of the relationship between researcher and research by decolonizing the discourse of the other and securing that while interpretation of findings is always done through the eyes and cultural standards of the researcher. (p. 180)

The researcher reviewed the results of the surveys and interviews. The results of the surveys and interviews were coded using pseudonyms to protect the identity of the research participants. The results of the surveys and interviews were separated and categorized by themes. Student and parent responses were summarized in preparation for

analysis. The responses were analyzed into similar themes. Horizontalization method is a data reviewing process that requires searching for statements relevant to the topic (Moustakas, 1994). Student and parent surveys and interview responses were “clustered into common categories or themes” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 118). Common emerging themes were documented and analyzed in regard to the questions which guided this study. “As with any qualitative study, the research was not used to evaluate a predetermined hypothesis” (Creswell, 2013, p. 5). The data was qualitatively coded and emerging themes were used to guide the construction of a transition intervention plan. After the results were reviewed, the researcher worked with the administrative team. HGHS’s administrative team consists of the President, Building Principal, and Assistant Principal. The data from the research was used to develop an action plan that would incorporate information from the surveys and interviews to assist students and parents with transitioning to high school.

The student survey examined student feelings about high school preparation. The surveys and interviews also examined the social concerns of students while transitioning into high school. Another component of the student survey was that it assisted with identification of how students perceived their work load, support of their parents and/or family, and their level of participation in extra-curricular activities.

The focus of the parent survey examined if the parents felt their child was academically prepared to transition into high school. The survey also examined parent’s perception of how the child responded to social situations such as making friends, getting lost, etc. Finally, the survey examined the parent’s comfort regarding their child’s ability

to complete the necessary course work while identifying a circle of support and participating in extra-curricular activities.

The interview questions for the students and the parents examined similar topics when compared to the survey questions. The main focus of the interview questions was to provide the students and parents with an area to elaborate on their perceptions about the transition process. The interview allowed the students and parents an opportunity to specifically describe their feelings about the overall transition process, the level of preparation prior to transitioning to high school, and the level of school and staff involvement throughout the process.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

This study used four data collection tools. The four tools included: student survey (SS), student interview (SI), parent survey (PS), and parent interview (PI). The SS was used to gain the students' perspectives of the transition process. It was created by the researcher and used open ended questions. The survey was used to gain information about the student's social perceptions. These questions were aligned with the literature in Chapter Two regarding social ramifications that students encounter as they transition into the high school learning environment.

The SI was used to gain more detail about the student's perceptions concerning the social and academic aspects of high school transition. This tool was created by the researcher. The questions used inquired about the student's overall perception of the transition process and their level of involvement. Students were asked about their concerns related to the high school transition process and their fears and apprehensions

pertaining to high school were identified. The SI examined the circle of support within the school setting and response to the increased level of academic responsibility.

The PS was created by the researcher. The survey was used to measure the parent's perspective of the overall transition process by using open ended questions. Much like the SS, the PS gained information about the parent's social perceptions. These questions were aligned with the literature in chapter two about some of the social ramifications that parents encounter as their child transitioned into high school.

The PI was used to measure the parents more detailed feelings about the transition process. More specifically, the PI inquired about the level of support for the students and parents. The PI assisted the parent with identifying feelings about the academic work load, fears, concerns, and apprehensions that may or may not have been addressed throughout the process.

The SS and SI was administered to the students by the researcher. When conducting the surveys and interviews, students were asked to not identify themselves using their real names and/or any identifying information. Furthermore, this process assisted with increasing the level of comfort for the students while being further assured that the researcher would not unethically administer a consequence to any inappropriate actions based on their responses.

The PS and PI were administered by the researcher. When the researcher conducted the interviews and administered the surveys, the parents were also asked to identify themselves using pseudonyms and exclude any identifying information. This procedure ensured that when their responses were coded, anonymity remained paramount and that there would be no additional ramifications towards their child.

Participants in the study were surveyed and interviewed at the beginning of January, 2017. This increased the likelihood that the participants were settled into their first year of high school. Surveys and interviews were completed and conducted within three to four weeks. All participants were informed of potential risks as a result of their participation in the research study. Finally, all participants were informed that there was no compensation associated with participation in the study.

The research design selected for this study provided an opportunity to identify similar themes as it related to the student and parent responses of the surveys and interviews. Duplicated responses only added to the substance of the findings. Usage of the phenomenological method prompted the researcher to hone in on what they deemed relevant to the research based on the participant's responses. "He or she then integrates these themes into a narrative description of the phenomenon" (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 433). A summary of these themes and the data collected will be presented in Chapter Four.

Limitations

When conducting research, limitations are common. The limitations of this study were as follows:

1. At the time of the study, the researcher unintentionally displayed bias towards some interview questions. The researcher was an administrator at HGHS and had access to sensitive information concerning the orientation session and transition process. Therefore, the questions may have been designed to highlight weakness within the program because the researcher had access to sensitive information regarding the transition process.

2. At the time of the study, the participants had already completed one full semester of their freshmen year of high school. As students answered interview questions many had already become acclimated to the school and learning environments. Likewise, this study occurred over a short time frame; however, the purpose of the study was to capture in depth feelings of the transition process which occurs during a very specific time in their educational career.
3. The study had a limited number of participants. There were 95 ninth grade students enrolled at HGHS. All current ninth grade students and their parents were invited to participate in the study. The researcher only secured 25 participants. Seventeen of the participants were students and the remaining eight were parents of ninth grade students
4. The responses of the participants were limited concerning their feelings about the questions. Although the researcher had previous interactions with the research participants. The researcher's relationship with the participants impacted how transparent some of the research participants were when they responded to the survey and interview questions.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology of the study. A qualitative research method examines the perceptions of African American students and their parents during the high school transition process. Interviews and surveys suggested a theme in the data using a phenomenological research method. The phenomenological research method afforded the researcher the opportunity to identify reoccurring themes when surveying and interviewing the study participants. Research participants were identified using self-

assigned pseudonyms. Usage of pseudonyms also guaranteed confidentiality. Chapter Four will present the results of the student and parent surveys and interviews while providing a further analysis to how students and parents perceive the current transition process. This chapter will reveal emerging themes from data collected.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

This study examined the perceptions of African American students and parents as they transitioned into a private high school. Participants completed a survey and an interview conducted by the researcher. Pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality of the research participants. The results of the surveys and interviews were analyzed and the researcher identified common themes. Student and parent responses provided the researcher with a more detailed viewpoint of perceptions concerning the high school transition process. The parents and students were asked to reflect and provide feedback on the orientation sessions which were intended to ensure a smooth high school transition. This chapter will provide an overview of design, description of participants, and an analysis of results within the context of the research questions.

Overview

The researcher's study examined how the social and academic needs of African American students and parents were addressed when transitioning into His Grace High School, a private school in St. Louis, Missouri. Transitioning into high school is a major event in the lives of students. "The stresses created by these transitions can be minimized when the new environment is responsive to each particular age group" (Schumacher, 1998, p. 1). Furthermore, Kerr (2002) shared that students participating in a transition program are less likely to fail and be retained.

Student surveys and interviews took place at HGHS. However, the parent survey and interview was administered in various environments. Some parents opted to meet the

researcher at HGHS while others opted to converse via phone, and/or meet in a public place. The participants who opted to meet in a public place indicated this setting would positively influence the relationship between the researcher and participant. The participants who chose to participate via phone expressed a strong desire to participate; but due to personal and professional obligations, a face-to-face meeting was not possible. Conducting the interviews and surveys in a variety of locations did not impact the results of the study.

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) How do students and parents perceive the transition process from eighth grade to ninth grade? (b) How do students and parents feel the school assisted them with the high school transition process? (c) How can students and parents assist the school with the high school transition process? and (d) How did the process assist with dispelling any myths regarding the transition from eighth into ninth grade? The researcher presented the study findings, reporting participant characteristics and common themes among the students and parent's responses to the survey and interview questions. After administering the surveys and interviews the researcher analyzed the data and noted emerging themes from the responses.

Participant Characteristics

The ninth grade class at HGHS totaled 95 students at the time of the study, 25 students and parents volunteered to participate in the study. Seventeen of the research participants were students with the remaining eight being parents. Student and parent interviews and surveys were administered to the research participants. The composition of the research participants' family varied. Some of the research participants were from

two parent homes. However, many of the participants were from single parent homes with a female parent and/or grandparent being the head of the household. A few of the research participant families comprised of a male parent being the head of the household. Three of the parent research participants were from two-parent homes. Five of the remaining parent research participants were from one-parent homes. The researcher contacted the parents of the four student participants and was informed they would reach out to the researcher and schedule a time to complete the survey and the interview. However, after multiple attempts, the researcher was not successful.

Student participants included traditional and non-traditional college bound candidates. A traditional college bound student at HGHS was defined as one who will require a minimum amount of structure and assistance. He/she will be an academically sound student and will complete his high school tenure with a minimum level of overall challenges. For example, a traditional college bound student may be accepted into four-year post-secondary institutions while receiving several scholarship offers. A non-traditional college bound student at HGHS was defined as one who may require a significant amount of structure and assistance. He/she will not be an academically sound student and will consistently require interventions, modifications, and supports to complete high school tenure. A non-traditional college bound student may also attend a two-year post-secondary institution while receiving a limited amount of scholarship opportunities. Six of the student research participants encountered academic challenges as they transitioned into HGHS. The remaining 11 did not encounter a significant level of academic challenges as they transitioned. Two of the six students who encountered academic challenges were provisionally admitted into HGHS and placed on a

probationary acceptance contract. Provisionally admitted HGHS students must maintain a 2.0 or above grade point average in order to remain a student in good standing. In the event a student earns a grade point average below a 2.0, he/she may be asked to withdraw. Standardized assessment scores and grade point averages from their elementary/middle school predict that these students will attend a non-traditional college or institution of higher learning.

The financial make up of each family differed. A few families received some form of financial assistance to compensate for the annual tuition expenses. Three of the student research participants were not eligible for financial assistance. They were required to pay full tuition based on their family income. Some of the participants were more social when compared to others. Moreover, many of the participants struggled behaviorally. Six of the student research participants encountered some level of academic challenge as they transitioned into high school. Two of these students were provisionally admitted and on a discipline contract. A select few of the participants were athletes. Finally, some of the students received some form of social, emotional, and academic support inside and outside of the school's learning environment. None of the student participants were identified as having special education and medical needs.

Research Question 1: How do students and parents perceive the transition process from eighth grade to high school?

The results of the interview and survey yielded multiple themes. The themes pertained to student and parent perceptions of the transition process. One of the emerging themes from the interviews and surveys pertained to an uncertainty about how

the transition process addressed concerns of students and parents from a predominately African American high school.

RQ1 Theme 1: Parent feelings about how the school assisted with the transition process.

The descriptive survey results revealed that overall, parents felt that their child was prepared to transition into high school. The average survey results revealed a score of a 4 out of 5 with 5 being very confident their child was prepared for high school. However, when responding to the interview questions, the parent results were contradictory. The parent interview results revealed that two of the eight parents felt their child was prepared to transition into the high school learning environment.

Mr. Young, a parent research participant, expressed a high level of satisfaction with the orientation session. 'Some of the information they discussed was new to me,' shared Mr. Young. He too stressed the importance of the school community embracing all families to have a united front when it comes to educating children. Collaborating with all stakeholders allowed a consistent relationship to develop between home and school. 'When kids know that the home and school are on the same page, the likelihood of negative behavior being exhibited decreases,' said Mr. Young.

Other parents, Mr. and Mrs. Adams, agreed and spoke about their previous relationship with HGHS. 'Our daughter is currently attending HGHS, and this afforded us an opportunity to develop relationships while getting to know the school environment,' said Mrs. Adams. The Adams family attributed their positive feeling about the orientation and transition process to their previous experience and relationship they have with HGHS faculty and staff.

Some of the feelings and parental concerns pertaining to the high school orientation and transition process can be broken down into themes. Within each parental response to the data also revealed subthemes. The opinions of the parent research participants varied when compared to those who were concerned about their child reaching their fullest potential, students who had minimal experience with predominately African American settings, and orientation fully reaching and addressing the parental concerns.

Subtheme 1: Parental uncertainty regarding students who have not previously attended a predominately African American high school.

Some of the parents interviewed had children who had not previously attended a private and/or predominately African American school before enrolling into HGHS. One theme from the data pertained to feelings of uncertainty and nervousness of how HGHS would address the concerns of students and parents as they prepared to transition into a predominately African American high school. Ms. Williams discussed her concerns of her daughter potentially not having a classroom educator with the same ethnicity. 'I don't want to sound prejudice; but, I don't know if Caucasian teachers can meet the needs of my daughter.' Additionally, Ms. Williams discussed a concern about the small number of African American educators at HGHS. Ms. Williams said, 'In my experience with teachers, those from other ethnic backgrounds are challenged with relating to African American students and pushing them to excel academically.' Mr. Young spoke about a similar concern regarding his son being in public school during his entire elementary/middle school career with an enormous amount of exposure to African American educators and their culture.

Mr. Young said:

Bilal's public school was predominately all black. I could count on one hand how many white teachers were at his school. I felt like the black teachers were able to identify with the daily struggles my son has as a black man growing up in today's society. When I sent him to his old school, I was not as concerned about the stories and information he would gain from his teachers. I knew that they had similar experiences and would be honest with my son.

'I like the idea of my son being in a school with mostly people who look like us,' said Mr. Coleman, another parent participant. Mr. Coleman too mirrored feelings similar to Mr. Young and Ms. Williams about if educators from other ethnic backgrounds could assist his son with attaining success while addressing cultural and societal myths. All of the parental research participants spoke about their belief that African American students need to be exposed to educators and experiences within the academic day that relate to their cultural upbringing. Mr. and Mrs. Dent said, 'I would have loved to ensure that our children too were exposed to educators who looked like us.'

Subtheme 2: Parental thoughts on how orientation did not address their concerns.

Another emerging theme from the results indicated that parents felt orientation did not fully address the needs of students and parents. The research participants shared that they expected freshmen orientation to address a significant amount of their concerns. Mr. Young shared that 'I thought the orientation would specifically discuss opportunities for students to receive additional assistance outside of the classroom.' A few of the parents felt that orientation did not speak to processes and resources that would ensure

students were successful when they encountered academic difficulty. Mr. and Mrs. Dent shared,

Kaitlyn will encounter some academic difficulty and when that time arises we need for her to know how to access additional help outside of the classroom. I think the teachers should have scheduled days and times for students to get additional help.

Mr. and Mrs. Dent had neutral feelings about the effectiveness of the orientation session. 'I've been connected with HGHS for more than a decade, I don't think I could ever have a negative experience,' said Mr. Dent.

According to Mrs. Dent, Kaitlyn struggles as a result of her difficulty with accepting responsibility for her actions as well as not adhering to the guidance and direction of the adults in the school and home environments. Mrs. Dent spoke about a strong desire to access resources that would address Kaitlyn's needs. However, 'the specific concerns I had would not be appropriate to share during a mass orientation session,' expressed Mrs. Dent. She too shared that she was confident that the staff of HGHS would continue to ensure that she had access to supports for Kaitlyn. 'When I spoke with the administrator, she shared that Kaitlyn would have access to a counselor who could assist her with navigating through high school,' shared Mrs. Dent.

Unfortunately, some of the parent research participants revealed that the orientation did not fully provide them with what they needed to assist with preparing their son/daughter to transition into high school. For instance, some of the parents had specific questions about attaining additional financial assistance. Ms. Black, a single parent, was

concerned about the cost of HGHS and if financial assistance was available. Ms. Black said:

Miguel has been in private school for his entire educational career. At his previous school, financial assistance was available; but it was on a first come first serve basis. I thought the orientation session would delve further into the financial assistance piece or guide parents towards avenues to get additional financial resources.

Another question that was not directly addressed during the session concerned the specificity of outside clubs and activities available for students. The results of the parent surveys revealed that parents wanted their children to be involved and exposed to extracurricular. The parent survey response to feelings about a need for students to increase their level of involvement in school was an average score of 4 out of 5 on the survey tool. Descriptive data from the parent survey revealed a strong desire from parents for students to become involved in extracurricular activities. Moreover, the parent interview results supported this data. Parents spoke of a strong desire for the orientation session to identify opportunities for students to become involved in clubs and activities. Mr. Coleman shared, 'I was curious to learn about the afterschool clubs and activities that Darnell could sign up for.' Similarly, 'Aaricka is an avid dancer; and, I wanted to hear if a dance club was available at HGHS afterschool,' expressed Ms. Williams.

Although some of the parent participants shared their concerns were addressed during the parent orientation; many of their responses to future interview questions contradicted their response. Descriptive survey data revealed that parents felt their needs

were addressed during the parent orientation. Survey results were an average 4 out of 5 which revealed parents felt their needs were addressed during the orientation session. However, the aforementioned theme provided supporting data that contradicted their responses.

Parents perceived how the transition process met their respective needs differently depending on their level of education, number of children, and relationship with the school's faculty and staff. For instance, if a parent of a current high school freshmen also had an older child, their transition process was smoother when compared to those who did not have an older child when disaggregating the results of the parent interview. Parent research participants who had a previous relationship with HGHS believed their transition process was a lot smoother when compared to those who had no prior experience with HGHS. 'Having worked with the faculty and staff of HGHS I was certain that my parental needs would be met,' exclaimed Ms. Carter.

Life circumstances prevented Mr. Coleman from graduating high school. When speaking with the researcher he spoke candidly about his potential limitations when attempting to assist his son with the high school transition process. Mr. Coleman shared, 'because I didn't finish the twelfth grade, I can't tell my son what to expect.' He too felt that his lack of exposure was a hindrance to making sure Darnell knows how to be successful in a high school environment.

On one hand, many of the parents shared they felt the high school transition process assisted them and their child with a smooth transition. On the other hand, the responses to the interview questions revealed different information. Mr. Young shared that he was concerned about his son's transition process; moreover, specifically

concerned about the peer group with which he became acquainted. However, his response to the inquiry about having concerns about his son transitioning into high school was negative. 'Bilal was provisionally admitted into HGHS, I was hoping for some clarity about what supports were available for provisionally admitted students,' shared Mr. Young. Moreover, Mr. Young spoke with the researcher about his extensive knowledge of his son's challenges during his elementary/middle school career. Mr. Young stated, 'During orientation, I needed some additional assurance that my son would not be targeted because of being on a contract.'

Many of the parent research participants shared that they felt the transition process addressed their apprehensions, fears, concerns, etc.; however, their responses contradicted their reply. Parental responses to the parent survey revealed the parents felt their son/daughter was prepared for high school. However, when interviewed, parents indicated that the transition process did not address their apprehensions, fears, concerns, etc. Results from the parental survey also revealed parents felt their son/daughters were more concerned about high school. For instance, Mr. Young shared that he graciously appreciated the information presented during orientation. However, during his interview, he stated that the orientation session did not fully address his needs and those of his son. 'I had all of my questions written down in advance with the hope that I would have an opportunity for them to be addressed,' shared Mr. Young.

Ms. Black shared that she felt the orientation session was helpful; but, it did not fully address her concerns regarding her son (Miguel) transitioning into high school. When interviewed, Ms. Black initially expressed that she was pleased with the orientation session. As the researcher probed further about her feelings regarding the orientation

process, Ms. Black shared some concerns that were not fully addressed. Ms. Black also shared that she had an array of questions when compared to other parents who attended the orientation session. 'Unfortunately, I did not feel that the orientation session fully addressed my concerns about transition,' stated Ms. Black. Additionally, Miguel has attended private school since kindergarten and the thought of moving to a new school terribly frightened Ms. Black. She spoke candidly about wanting additional information pertaining to supports for students and parents as they transitioned into the high school environment.

Ms. Black reported:

The transition process was not as smooth as I felt it should be. Some of the activities and information shared did not fully address the concerns of the students and parents. A few of the parents that were seated near me said they felt that additional information should be addressed during the orientation sessions. Some parents felt that the orientation session should be mandatory for all students. The period in which the orientation was scheduled was not conducive to my professional obligations.

Sub Theme 3: Parental concerns about students reaching their fullest potential.

Parent survey results revealed that parents an average of 4 out of 5 felt that orientation addressed the concern of students having a support circle to assist with the high school transition process. However, their response to the interview questions concerning identification of a circle of support contradicted this data. Parents felt that the orientation session did not fully address the concern and/or need of identifying a circle of support within the school environment. Mrs. Adams spoke about a need to ensure that

Mark was able to identify a mentor within the school setting outside of his older sister who currently attends HGHS. 'I'd hoped that orientation would have identified avenues for students to be paired with a peer mentor,' said Mrs. Adams. Ms. Carter and Mr. Black also spoke of specific concerns regarding their children's needs for a peer mentor and how orientation did not speak to this specific concern. 'I wanted to hear specific information about how my son could be partnered with a strong male who could assist him with the transition,' said Mr. Black.

Parents disclosed that during the orientation session there was no discussion of how educators would work to motivate their students. 'I am often worried about my granddaughter being placed in a class where the teacher is not concerned about her success,' said Ms. Carter. According to Mr. Young, we all hear stories of teachers who go to work just for a paycheck. During the interview, several of the parents spoke of wanting educators who referred to their career as a vocation and not a job. 'I want to make sure my son is going to be pushed to reach his highest potential,' expressed Mr. Young.

Ms. Williams spoke about being concerned about Aaricka being challenged academically and being a negative influence in the learning environment. 'When Aaricka is bored, she has a tendency to disrupt the learning environment,' said Ms. Williams. Ms. Williams also spoke of the importance of educators meeting the diverse needs of her daughter. 'I cannot afford to send her to a school where she is not going to be challenged,' exclaimed Ms. Williams.

Mr. and Mrs. Dent shared with the researcher that they felt the school did a mediocre job of assisting to ease parent concerns about the level of available supports

with the transition process. 'I think that intermittent informational sessions throughout the ninth grade year could provide a higher level of assistance,' exclaimed Mr. Dent. Mr. and Mrs. Dent furthermore shared that having additional informational sessions would afford parents an opportunity to establish a better rapport with the school, faculty, and staff. 'Having additional opportunities to interface between parents and teachers would decrease the probability of academic failure,' shared Mrs. Dent. The Dents shared with the researcher that their former experience at educational environments outside of HGHS with having intermittent sessions increased the number of parents being active participants in the school community. 'Meeting the teachers twice a school year is not frequent enough for me,' exclaimed Mrs. Dent.

'It's an uphill battle with Kaitlyn,' said Mr. Dent. Mrs. Dent shared that she was extremely concerned about Kaitlyn's social circle and level of academic attainment. According to Mr. Dent, Kaitlyn has been required to go to summer school to make up failed coursework. Mrs. Dent shared:

She is fully capable to get straight A's; I am not sure why she chooses to fail. In spite of Kaitlyn's strong circle of support, she consistently makes choices that land her in uncompromising social and academic situations.

She has always struggled in school to make the right choices; I am surprised that HGHS has not put her out yet.

Mr. Young reminded the researcher of how important education is to the African American community and more specifically to African American males. 'There needs to be an ongoing exchange between the home and school environments to make certain that home and school are on the same page,' stated Mr. Young.

Ms. Carter expressed concerns of Kameryn adjusting socially and continuing to maintain her current level of academic achievement from her former school. 'She has enough baggage to deal with regarding her mom and dad. I hope she can stay focused on her academics,' exclaimed Ms. Carter. Results of the interview too revealed that Kameryn would potentially benefit from some additional supports within the school environment according to Ms. Carter. The orientation session did not specifically discuss additional supports for students.

Mr. and Mrs. Campbell, mother and stepfather of James were both participants in the research. Mr. and Mrs. Campbell shared with the researcher they felt out of touch with raising a kid in high school. 'My son and daughter are both in college so it has been years since I've had a high school aged kid,' said Mr. Campbell. The Campbells were equally concerned about James getting in with the wrong crowd. 'He is full of academic potential; but, thinks that it is not cool to get A's and B's in school,' according to Mrs. Campbell. 'I sometimes wonder if he purposely picks the wrong crowd to ruffle our feathers,' stated Mr. Campbell.

RQ1 Theme 2: Students feelings about how the school assisted with the transition process.

The student descriptive survey data indicated 4 out of 5 students felt prepared to transition into high school. When surveyed, all of the students indicated they were significantly prepared to transition into the high school setting. However, the descriptive interview data results were contradictory. More than half of the students indicated that the high school orientation and transition process did fully address their concerns. Some of the emerging themes from the results pertained to the level of support for students

within the educational setting, addressing the myths of high school, and workload for their academic responsibilities. Data from the research study revealed students' interview results and their perception of the transition process.

How the student research participants perceived the transition process varied depending on if they attended a private catholic school or the number of siblings they had. For instance, if a freshmen student attended a private Catholic high school, he/she felt the orientation session prepared them to transition into high school. The researcher looked at the survey and interview questions to identify emerging themes in response to the level of assistance available to students throughout the transition process. The first emerging theme from the level of support given to students was the research participants felt the orientation session did not fully address all of the initial concerns of a transitioning student. More than half of the student participants, 13 out of 17, felt that the orientation session did not fully address the student's needs. Four of the student research participants shared information indicating displeasure with the orientation's ability to address their concerns.

Subtheme 1: Students with negative feelings regarding orientation addressing their concerns.

The interview results revealed four of the 17 student research participants had negative feelings regarding the orientation session. Of the four students who were displeased with the orientation session, all believed that the orientation session was not a good use of their time. Additionally, they felt that the information shared during the session could have been disseminated via electronic communication or usage of the postal service.

Madysn is a member of the spirit squad (cheerleaders) and when speaking with adults she speaks very candidly. She was not shy about expressing her high level of disdain for how the orientation addressed her concerns as she transitioned. Madysn also spoke about how she felt her individual needs could be met moving forward. 'I could have Skyped into the orientation and saved myself some time,' stated Madysn. Madysn said that she was glad to be attending HGHS; but felt the information could have been shared via the internet or mail. 'At my old school, we didn't have an orientation,' she shared.

Raashaunna was another research participant who disclosed negative information about the orientation session and how it addressed her concerns regarding the transition into high school. 'I am glad that orientation wasn't all day...I had somewhere to go and was ready to meet my teachers and leave,' Raashaunna adamantly shared. Raashaunna discussed how initially excited she was to meet new friends. 'A lot of my friends from my other school are going to the school in our neighborhood, I thought that orientation would have given us an opportunity to meet new people,' shared Raashaunna.

Jeffery was also a student who had attended a neighboring private school. He spoke about how significant the structures and supports were that assisted him with the transition process at his previous school. Jeffery shared that the orientation process did not share any new information when compared to the information he had learned while at his previous school. 'My graduate support worker scheduled several visits to HGHS and partnered me with a current HGHS student,' said Jeffery. Additionally, Jeffery disclosed, 'My graduate support worker had several meetings with some of my classmates and I to

explain the transition process and describe what supports would be available once I got to high school.'

Kaiden was the final student research participant who was displeased with the orientation session. Kaiden shared with the researcher that he felt the session disclosed information that he felt was outdated. 'I think the information they shared during orientation has been the same for years,' said Kaiden. Kaiden shared:

A lot of the information they talked about seemed out dated. We watched a film about appropriate touching and it seemed like situations that my parents would have dealt with. The technology part of the orientation talked about electronic devices that kids don't even use anymore.

Subtheme 2: Students with positive feelings regarding orientation addressing their concerns.

The data revealed 14 student research participants who had positive feelings about how the orientation addressed their concerns. Both males and females were pleased with the orientation session. The student research participants shared with the researcher positive feelings about the transition process.

Kymerli was the first student research participant who spoke positively about the orientation session at HGHS. Kymerli is one of five siblings; however, she is the only child who currently attends a private school. She enrolled in HGHS after experiencing a litany of challenges at her previous school. Her mother, a single parent, who has an array of medical concerns, is raising Kymerli.

Although Kymerli was a transfer student into the private sector, she shared 'I had to attend the orientation to learn more about my new school.' She too discussed that

the orientation session provided her with useful information that prepared her for the upcoming school year. 'Because my mama couldn't attend the orientation session, I attended both of them to get all of the information I could,' said Kymberli. She spoke with the researcher about her feelings of potentially hearing different information during the parent orientation. 'I was surprised that the information discussed with the students was not very different from what was shared with the parents,' revealed Kymberli. She also shared with the researcher that she felt the information discussed during the parent orientation session would have focused more on meeting parental needs as their child transitioned into high school. 'After leaving the parent orientation session, I did not have more information than I had from attending the student orientation,' expressed Kymberli. Miguel's mother, Ms. Black, is a stay at home single mom. Primarily his mother who is a stay at home mom is raising Miguel. He shared; 'I get a lot of support from my uncle who tells me the truth no matter what.' In spite of the candid conversations Miguel had prior to transitioning into high school, he felt the orientation session was useful. 'I appreciated walking through the building, locating my classes, and the opportunity to hear about the expectations from the Principal,' shared Miguel. Furthermore, Miguel spoke about how much he appreciated the President of HGHS sharing her personal experience at HGHS. Miguel stated, 'Her sharing information about her personal experience made me think about how adults have experienced similar life situations.'

Miguel reported:

I think that orientation prepared me for high school. Me and my uncle talked a lot last year about what to expect. Some of my friends would even join (in on) the conversations me and unc (uncle) would have about

what to do and how to stay out of trouble. When my mama would try to chime in, he would give her a look if she wasn't keeping it real.

Alexzander was provisionally admitted into HGHS on an academic contract. During his elementary/middle school career, he experienced some life altering situations, which had a negative impact on his level of academic achievement. Alexzander is an outgoing young man. He lives with his stepmother and biological father. Alexzander has a younger sibling who is not old enough to be enrolled in school yet. Alexzander's reaction to the orientation session was that he appreciated what was shared and discussed. Alexzander shared:

I realize that high school is the turning point in my life. I know now how important it is to get good grades and make sure I get ahead of my classmates. Even though I hate that the things happened that caused me to not do well last year, I am kinda glad that they happened because it made me look at education differently. HGHS is going to allow me to show my family who I really am as a student.

Kaitlyn is the granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dent. Kaitlyn has lived with her grandparents since she was in the first grade. Mr. and Mrs. Dent attended the freshmen orientation and ensured that Kaitlyn too attended the student orientation and accompanied them. Kaitlyn shared with the researcher that she appreciated the orientation session. 'I had an opportunity to get a head start on meeting some people and finding out who I had classes with,' said Kaitlyn. Kaitlyn also shared that she appreciated how the orientation session allowed time for students to locate their classes within the academic wing. Kaitlyn said, 'When school starts, I won't have to worry about trying to find my classes.'

Mark is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Adams. His family has been connected with HGHS for multiple years. Mark has an older sister who currently attends HGHS. Mark shared with the researcher how excited he was to begin his high school career. 'Even though my sister goes to HGHS, I wanted to experience orientation for myself,' exclaimed Mark. Mark shared with the researcher that he wanted to be sure that his experience was different from his older sisters' experience. Mark revealed, 'I am tired of being compared to my sister and living through her experiences.'

Kameryn lives with her grandmother, Ms. Carter. Ms. Carter is an alum of HGHS. Due to Ms. Carter's deep ties with the school, Kameryn shared with the researcher that she felt that she has been in attendance at HGHS before. 'My granny talks about HGHS all of the time,' said Kameryn. She also spoke about how she had a positive experience at orientation. Kameryn revealed:

The orientation session was only half a day. I was excited to meet some new friends and listen to what I should expect once school started. At first, I assumed that orientation would be boring and I would not learn anything. I was glad that the orientation was not just focused on school history. The principal was funny and I took notes on what he talked about.

Bilal, is the oldest of his siblings. 'I feel it is up to me to get it right so I can show my sisters and brothers,' said Bilal. Bilal spoke about how attentive he was to the information being shared during the student and parent orientation sessions. He also discussed how he appreciated HGHS offering orientation for new students. Bilal felt the information shared during the orientation session was beneficial to him and his quest of success in high school.

Kendrick is the baby in his family. His siblings are both older and have graduated from high school and pursuing their careers. 'My parents have no idea about how to help me transition to high school,' laughed Kendrick. Kendrick spoke about how his parents' age impeded them from talking to him about what to expect during high school.

Attending the orientation session shed some light on beneficial information according to Kendrick I was glad that during the orientation session we learned about what to expect during high school. 'Both the President and Principal shared some very good information about what to do once we were in high school,' shared Kendrick.

Vincent and his family were new to the area. They wanted to participate in all opportunities that would allow them to become better acquainted with the school and area. Vincent has a twin sister who attends a private school. His parents are new to the private sector. Vincent spoke with the researcher about the orientation process. He divulged that he did not know what to expect so he had neutral feelings about the session. Vincent shared, 'Neither of my parents are from St. Louis, both of them shared that schools down south are a lot different.' He shared with the researcher that because they were new to the area, it was a little difficult to connect with friends and people who could assist him with transitioning into HGHS.

Vincent appreciated the information that was discussed during the orientation session. Prior to attending the session, Vincent shared that he attempted to reach out to some others that he met during football camp to inquire about information regarding transitioning into high school. 'Everyone that I spoke with seemed to be as lost as I was,' shared Vincent. Vincent also said that he wanted to speak with his coach but was fearful that he could not relate to Vincent and/or his peers.

Ashlee is an only child. She has been in private school since kindergarten. Both of her parents attended public school. 'I had a lot of questions and none of them were addressed,' said Ashlee. Furthermore, Ashlee discussed a strong desire to meet with an administrator after the orientation but was unable to do so due to time constraints. Ashlee expressed to the researcher that she wanted specific information about clubs and activities that were offered during the school year. 'I understood that my question was individual so I wanted to make sure that I spoke with someone after the session,' said Ashlee. However, Ashlee did share she was glad that the session briefly discussed how students could get involved in activities at HGHS. Ashlee stated, 'I had a doctor appointment after orientation so I could not stay and talk to anyone about my question.'

Frederick is a quiet young man; but, very popular. He has participated in upper level varsity sports since he was in youth leagues. He discussed how he felt the orientation session assisted him with transitioning. 'I think the information that the administrators shared was beneficial,' said Frederick. He also shared with the researcher that during orientation he was able to meet a friend who was familiar with HGHS. 'I enjoyed talking to Mark, he was able to answer some of my questions because his older sister goes to HGHS,' shared Frederick.

Darnell had a positive experience during orientation. He discussed with the researcher that he was pleased to be able to experience something in life that his father was unable to experience. 'My daddy did not graduate from high school and going to HGHS will allow me to share with him what it's like to go to high school,' shared Darnell. He also stated, 'They shared information about the school and made me

comfortable.' Darnell spoke with the researcher about how orientation discussed what to expect in high school and how to be successful.

James is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Campbell. James had a positive experience during the orientation session. He shared with the researcher how excited he was to talk to his father about his orientation experience. 'I remember my dad smiling when he picked me up from orientation and listened to me talk about what I learned,' said James. James shared with the researcher that his dad told him that his level of excitement urged him to accompany his mother to the parent orientation session.

Aaricka was the last of the research participants who revealed that the orientation session assisted with transitioning into high school. Aaricka spoke about the daily schedule. Aaricka's responses to the interview questions supported the student survey results. An average student score of 4 out of 5, with 5 being the highest, indicated the orientation assisted them with transitioning into high school. 'We had rotating schedules at my old school; but, we didn't have rotating blocks,' said Aaricka. Schedules were disseminated during the orientation session, which afforded the students an opportunity to locate their classes and locker prior to the beginning of the school year. 'We were broken into groups and given a building tour,' said Aaricka. Aaricka shared with the researcher how each student was given their class schedule before going on a building tour. Aaricka said, 'I'm glad we were given our schedules first, this allowed us time to meet people who were in our classes.'

Research Question 2: How do students and parents feel the school assisted them with the high school transition process?

Students and parents had mixed feelings about how the school assisted with the transition process. Parent interview results revealed that the parents felt the school assisted them during the transition process. The results of the parent survey supported the parental viewpoint of the level of assistance with the transition process.

RQ2 Theme 1: Parents perceptions of how they feel the school assisted them with the high school transition process.

A theme that emerged from the research pertained to the level of support parents felt after attending the orientation session and how they perceived the school assisted them with the transition process. The survey and interview results identified the level of support available to parents as their children transitioned into high school. All of the parents felt that the orientation process assisted them with the transition process. The parents shared with the researcher positive feelings about how the orientation session assisted with the transition. Additionally, the parents felt that the orientation session afforded them an opportunity to have an open arena where parents could receive information about the transition process. However, one subtheme emerged from the results. Parents felt that ongoing support was needed throughout the school year to ensure success for all students.

The parent survey results also supported the results of the parent interview. All of the parents shared in the survey that the high school assisted with the transition process. Parents shared they were pleased that an orientation was offered which provided parents with a forum to hear pertinent information about the high school transition process.

Ms. Black spoke with the researcher about how much she felt the school assisted her with the transition process. 'Although I was uncertain as to how the school was

going to respond to my transition concerns, I was relieved to know that multiple resources were available to assist me,' said Ms. Black. Mr. and Mrs. Campbell also had positive thoughts about the level of assistance that HGHS provided them during the transition. Mr. Campbell spoke intently with the researcher about the level of support. 'James is the baby and I just want to make sure that he has the support he needs,' said Mrs. Campbell. She also shared with the researcher that orientation addressed her concerns of ensuring appropriate supports were in place for her son.

RQ 2 Subtheme 1: What additional supports parents needed to ensure a successful transition into high school

Parent research participants believed that ongoing support was needed as their son/daughter transitioned into the high school learning environment in addition to the provided orientation session. The consistent theme that emerged when analyzing the parent responses was the school's need to work at providing additional assistance and support to the parents. This common theme emerged when analyzing the results; however, how the school could address this recommendation was inconsistent. Two of the parent research participants discussed the need for additional supports during the parent interview.

'With Bilal being the oldest, I often speak to him about growing up and being a leader for his younger siblings,' stated Mr. Young. Mr. Young spoke with the researcher about the importance of identifying appropriate and positive supports within the school setting. 'Black males struggle to identify positive role models...I work hard at ensuring that he is surrounded by positive people and was reassured to know that HGHS would assist me in this effort,' said Mr. Black.

Ms. Williams candidly spoke with the researcher about members of her family that make it challenging to ensure Aaricka remains positive. 'Sometimes my family does not give Aaricka the right guidance needed,' shared Ms. Williams. Ms. Williams also spoke about the love she had for her family as well as the challenge she faces to work at dispelling some of the information that is shared via her family and on television. 'T.V. perpetuates negative images of black women and HGHS is full of positive females who can assist me with guiding Aaricka,' shared Ms. Williams.

The parent responses to these interview questions also contradicted their initial responses. Many of the parents identified that the orientation provided resources and tools that would support the students as they transitioned into high school. As the researcher delved further into the interview, the parent participants identified needs for resources they felt could assist with the transition process. The Campbells reported that, although they ensured that James is consistently involved and surrounded by positive role models, it is a constant battle for them to ensure he is successful.

Ms. Carter expressed concerns of her daughter Kameryn adjusting socially and continuing to maintain her current level of academic achievement from her former school. 'She has enough baggage to deal with regarding her mom and dad, I hope she can stay focused,' exclaimed Mrs. Carter. Results of the interview indicated Kameryn would potentially benefit from some additional adult supports within the school environment. Her grandmother felt that additional resources to support the students were not openly revealed and discussed. She also felt that with access to additional resources and tools all of the students would reach their full level of potential. 'I've personally

experienced how HGHS can help kids by implementing resources that force kids to reach their highest potential,' shared Ms. Carter.

Mr. Coleman is a single parent of Darnell, a first generation high school student. Mr. Coleman's life experiences did not afford him an opportunity to graduate from high school. However, Mr. Coleman's challenges with having only earned a G.E.D. are his internal motivation to challenge his son. Mr. Coleman was in attendance to the orientation session.

Mr. Coleman discussed his son's academic challenges. He also shared that as a result of previous choices Darnell was provisionally admitted to HGHS. 'HGHS is full of supportive people and resources that can assist with my son being successful,' shared Mr. Coleman. Mr. Coleman revealed, 'The transition process, support network and other resources ensured that Darnell was prepared for high school.' 'Unfortunately, we are now concerned about ...if my son will be allowed to return next semester because of his poor choices,' shared Mr. Coleman. 'Even though we are in limbo concerning Darnell's return, I appreciated how the orientation session addressed and met my needs as a parent,' stated Mr. Coleman. Mr. Coleman shared, 'The tools and resources divulged during the orientation session assured me that he would have ample access to tools and resources that would promote success.'

RQ2 Theme 2: Students perceptions of how they feel the school assisted them with the high school transition process.

The descriptive data revealed that the students felt the school assisted them with the transition process. Student survey results reported that an average of 4 out of 5 students, with 5 being the highest, felt the process assisted with a seamless transition into

high school. Student survey data also shared that their elementary/middle school was useful in helping with the high school transition process.

When students completed the interview, their responses did not support the results of the student survey. Five of the 17 students reported to the researcher that they felt the school assisted them with transitioning. Of the five who shared they felt the school assisted them, two had some type of previous connection with HGHS prior to enrolling in the ninth grade. Additionally, only one female felt the school assisted with the transition process.

Mark discussed with the researcher how he felt the orientation discussed pertinent information as to how he could be successful in high school. 'They talked about how the counselors and principal would be available for help if we needed it,' divulged Mark. He also shared with the researcher during his interview that the opportunity to tour the building, discussion about tutoring, and accessing teachers via e-mail was beneficial. Mark shared, 'At my other school, we could only talk to teachers before and right after school ended.' 'At HGHS, we can e-mail them and we even have a group chat for some of our classes to talk about our work,' shared Mark.

Kameryn was the only female who felt the school assisted her with transitioning. 'I am glad that some of the stuff my mama told me about before orientation was discussed.' Kameryn spoke during her interview about how information that she and her mom discussed previously was discussed in greater detail during orientation. She also spoke with the researcher about how she was excited to learn that the information her mom experienced years prior was still relevant to her transition.

‘Throughout the transition process, I felt at times I knew who I could go to for some help,’ shared Jeffery. Jeffery spoke with the researcher intensively about his feelings regarding the need to have predetermined support systems available to assist with the transition. He also shared with the researcher that he felt some input from his previous school was essential to him transitioning. ‘My new school and old school must have talked to each other to help kids understand what to expect when going into high school,’ stated Jeffery.

‘The whole time I was in school, I was scared about getting put out,’ shared Darnell. He spoke with the researcher about the resources and helpful information discussed during orientation. Darnell disclosed to the researcher that being involved with activities and having adults who cared about his progress helped him make a positive transition.

Bilal spoke with the researcher about how he appreciated the orientation ‘keeping it one hundred [real].’ Additionally, he revealed that the information shared reiterated to him the necessity to continue being a role model while taking advantage of the programs and resources available to assist with the transition process. ‘I’m so glad that HGHS has what I need to be successful, now it’s up to me to do it,’ said Bilal.

The final 13 student research participants spoke about the series of questions they had during the transition. The student participants shared with the researcher their feelings about a desire to have opportunities to work with older students who could relate to their struggles as they transitioned. Lastly the student research participants spoke about the desire to have ongoing consistent supports during the course of the school year.

'I don't understand why we had a lot of support at first then as time went on the level of support went down,' exclaimed Aaricka.

Research Question 3: How can students and parents assist the school with the high school transition process?

The parent research participants shared with the researcher their thoughts on how the school could involve parents in the transition process. All of the parent research participants felt that including them in the planning and implementation of the transition process, they could assist future students with a smooth transition into the high school learning environment. Seven of the eight parents who participated in the study attended the orientation session. Seven of the parents were new to HGHS. They wanted to make certain their child was informed and prepared for high school and transitioning into HGHS. All of the parent research participants provided suggestions with transitioning future ninth grade students. The common themes that emerged pertained to increased parental involvement and communication.

RQ 3 Subtheme 1: How parents feel they can assist the school with the high school transition process.

The first theme pertained to how parents felt they could assist the school community. Five of the parents felt they should be a part of the orientation planning process. Each of the parent research participants felt that parent input into the transition process would increase the level of comradery amongst the parents and teachers. Involving parents in the process would also allow them to develop positive relationships which contribute to their child's learning environment. As noted throughout the interviews, several of the parents felt that parental input into the orientation session

would be beneficial. Allowing parental input into the structure of orientation, according to the research participants, may ensure that the needs of the transitioning parents are met. The descriptive data of the parent survey did not fully address how parents could assist the school with the transition process. However, the descriptive data indicated that all of the parents felt that they were more concerned about their child transitioning into high school than the students were. Descriptive data from the parent surveys unanimously revealed all of the parents had some concern regarding the transition process.

Ms. Black spoke with the researcher about the parent organization at her son, Miguel's previous school. 'The Parent Organization was an asset to the school community, it afforded parents a forum to openly communicate about their child while sharing valuable information about the school,' shared Ms. Black. She also discussed with the researcher how strong Parent Organizations are often the backbone of a school community. 'Often times, the Parent Organization can support efforts within the school without imposing on the beliefs of the school's administration,' said Ms. Black.

Ms. Williams was another parent who spoke about including former parents of ninth grade students in the planning and implementation of the high school transition process. Ms. Williams said, 'A lot of times, you don't know what you don't know until you don't know it.' Furthermore, Ms. Williams discussed how former parents can speak directly from their personal experience. 'I understand that everyone may respond differently to the transition process; but, if we can hear it from our peers that may make transitioning less challenging,' said Ms. Williams.

'Often time teachers assume what we as parents know and their assumption is not always right,' said Mrs. Campbell. Parental input could be driven by information shared by members of the previous class. For instance, when planning next year's orientation session, administration could ask parents to identify pertinent information to be shared. One parent interviewee, Mr. Campbell, expressed that this involvement would help with fostering parent participation in the school community. 'When former parents are invited to assist and participate, this gives them a sense of value,' shared Mrs. Campbell. Mrs. Campbell disclosed to the researcher that much like student's adults too value and learn from their peers.

Mr. Coleman spoke with the researcher about his strong desire to be involved in high school. 'Because I didn't finish high school, I wanted to be involved in as much as I could,' stated Mr. Coleman. When speaking with the researcher, Mr. Coleman adamantly shared his thoughts and aspirations for his son while in attendance at HGHS.

Mr. and Mrs. Adams' history with HGHS had a positive influence on how they felt parents could contribute to the transition process. They both spoke about how parents could learn from each other. Mr. and Mrs. Adams shared that since this was their second child at HGHS they had a plethora of knowledge which could be helpful to the transition process. 'Since Mark is our second child at HGHS, I think we should be considered experts at this transition process,' said Mrs. Adams. She discussed with the researcher her belief of once a person has another attempt to complete the same task they typically respond better and differently. 'This is my second time at orientation, and now I know what to look for and can share my experiences with others with the hope they won't make the same mistakes,' said Mrs. Adams.

The remaining three parent research participants could not provide specific information about how they could contribute to the orientation process. Each of them individually shared that they felt that the faculty and staff of HGHS were the experts. Ms. Carter shared, 'I don't have a background in education, I look to them to know and do what's best for my granddaughter.'

Mr. and Mrs. Dent's viewpoint mirrored Ms. Carter's. They both spoke candidly about how long it had been since they had a child in high school. Additionally, they felt that their lack of experience in the high school environment would not allow them to positively contribute to the planning of an effective orientation session. 'I would not know where to start if the school asked me to help plan an orientation, not to mention, I am sure the kids would laugh at me if I got up and started talking to them about high school,' stated Mrs. Dent.

The final parent participant that felt they could not provide specific insight into the planning of an orientation session was Mr. Young. Although he was much younger than Ms. Carter and Mr. and Mrs. Dent, he too spoke about his feelings of being out of touch with the realities of high school. Mr. Young said, 'I can keep it real with my son, tell him what I did and what not to do; but, I am not sure if other parents want me to share my realities.'

RQ 3 Subtheme 2: How parents feel the school could assist by varied modes of effective communication.

A second theme from the data emerged. This theme pertained to effective communication. A majority of the parent research participants shared their views of how effective communication could contribute to a seamless transition. Coming from an

elementary/middle school environment, all of the parents spoke about the frequency of communication from their child's previous school. Each parent acknowledged their innate desire to remain aware of their child's progress without giving the impression that they were overbearing.

Five of the parents shared effectively communicating with parents would be an invaluable tool. Furthermore, they candidly spoke about the significance of learning from others which in their opinion was a form of effective communication. The descriptive data from the parent survey did not yield a need to address communication.

Parents shared with the researcher that active parental involvement would be an asset to the school community. 'Active involvement in the learning environment manifests in a variety of ways,' shared Mr. Young. Mr. Young, described active involvement as being in touch with your child's progress, volunteering at school events when schedules permit, and working with the school community to ensure the safety of all students. 'Being an active parent doesn't mean you have to be at the school all day every day,' said Ms. Black. Ms. Black adamantly spoke with the researcher about her desire to remain actively involved in the school community. Ms. Black stated, 'I do what I can and hope for the best.'

Ms. Williams, mother of Aaricka shared with the researcher that she was always concerned about Aaricka's academic and behavioral progress. Ms. Williams shared:

I know that this is middle school; however, I want to make sure that communication between home and school is consistent. I don't want to talk to her teachers daily; but, I don't want to hear from them once things have gotten really bad. As long as the information in the computer is

accurate, I will be fine. If it is not updated frequently, then they can expect to hear from me.

Additionally, Ms. Williams shared with the researcher that she does not respond well to teachers who act like they cannot speak to people. 'I need to know immediately what she is doing so I can stay on top of her,' said Ms. Williams.

Mr. and Mrs. Adams too spoke about the importance of communication and support. 'I e-mail my kids teachers at least once a week,' said Mrs. Adams. Mrs. Adams too shared, 'once the teachers saw that I wasn't going away, they started to e-mail me before I reached out to them by Christmas break.' Mr. Adams spoke with the researcher about the importance of effective communication in any relationship. 'In order for HGHS, my children, wife, and I to have an effective relationship, we must effectively communicate with one another,' stated Mr. Adams.

Mr. Campbell shared with the researcher, 'If I knew then what I knew now.' He spoke specifically to his challenges with the workload of their son. 'I would tell future parents, to monitor their child's homework,' said Mr. Campbell. Mr. and Mrs. Campbell spoke about their son's history of always staying on top of his work assignments. Mrs. Campbell exclaimed, 'I don't understand why it is so hard for teachers to email or call home when their student is having difficulty.' Moreover, they both reiterated to the researcher that if the lines of communication are open between home and school the chances of an incident greatly decrease.

RQ 3 Subtheme 3: How parents felt about additional supports for their child as they transition into high school.

In the parent research participant interviews, a need for mentoring students was an emerging. Results from the interview revealed that all of the parent research participants felt there was a need for HGHS to have additional supports. The parents spoke of a desire to have consistent academic support from all teachers.

Mr. Dent suggested kids have a stronger desire to excel academically when they know their teachers care. Mr. Dent shared, 'Kaitlyn has had some struggles during her educational career, once she had a feeling that her teachers cared about her progress, she excelled academically.' The parent research participants also spoke about HGHS needing to implement a mentoring program amongst the students for all grades and academic capabilities. Descriptive data from the survey yielded parental concerns about their child identifying a peer or adult who could assist them with increasing their level of comfort within the school environment. An average of 4 out of 5 on the parent interview, with 5 being the highest, revealed parents had a high concern about their child as they transitioned.

The results of the parent survey were an average of 2 out of 5, with 5 being the highest, confirmed parents' lack of trust with the school environment. Mr. Coleman shared with the researcher, 'I'd like to know that my son has a mentor within the school.' Mr. Adams also spoke with the researcher about his strong desire to ensure his son has positive and trusting adults within HGHS. These results indicated a need for consistent support and mentoring within the school environment. Ms. Black candidly talked about the absence of positive role models for her son and looked to the school for some assistance in this area. She also spoke about how some of her son's educators made

themselves available to assist him when needed as opposed to others who 'act like they are oblivious to his academic struggles.'

The parents felt that mentoring for all students would be beneficial. 'Most mentoring programs are geared for students who are struggling; however, I think it's a good resource for all students,' said Ms. Carter. HGHS has a mentoring component within the school; but, it is not consistently implemented. Mrs. Campbell candidly spoke about the House Program, which was designed to assist students of all ability and grade levels. Mrs. Campbell shared:

The House Program, was modeled after the Harry Potter movie. Its premise is to afford kids an opportunity to interact across grade levels while creating a relationship with their school peers. All of the students are broken into families and a member of the faculty or staff is the family elder. The students go to family a few times during the week at some point in the academic day. While they are in family, they can participate in relationship building, get assistance with their academics, or discuss current societal issues. This process is only valuable when the adults buy into the program and are willing to assist all students.

Mr. Young's responses to the interview question, mirrored the other parental research participants. He shared, 'When students have role models in and outside of the school environment that increases their likelihood of being successful.' Mr. Young also discussed with the researcher that he felt HGHS was in need of more members of the faculty and staff who not only were of the same ethnic group; but, were also able to fully understand the cultural challenges that African American students face in society. 'I

appreciated going to a school where I could see people who looked like me and I could learn about things that pertained directly to my life experiences,' stated Mr. Young.

'Aaricka, needs all of the help she can get,' exclaimed Ms. Williams. Ms. Williams spoke with the researcher about Aaricka's need to be inundated with positive role models and mentors. 'Even though she is a good kid, she tries to test the waters at times,' explained Ms. Williams. She too spoke with the researcher about HGHS' need to have positive people who can address today's cultural and societal concerns of African American females. 'I didn't have a lot of people in my high school that I could look up to. The only black people in my high school either worked in the offices, cafeteria, or in the maintenance department,' shared Ms. Williams.

RQ3 Subtheme 4: How students felt they could assist the school with the transition process.

All of the student participant responses did not mirror those of the parent research participants. Three of the student research participants spoke about the importance of obtaining input from students who had previously transitioned into the ninth grade. The students candidly discussed how their peers could share information that was related to their transitional experience. The data also revealed that three students who felt HGHS needed additional supports, were male students.

RQ 3 Subtheme 5: Students feelings that their input would be valuable to planning the orientation process.

Fifteen of the student research participants felt that they could not positively contribute to the planning of the orientation process. Each of them shared with the researcher that they felt it would be difficult to provide input into an experience they had

not encountered previously. The descriptive data from the student survey results confirmed that the student research participants felt they were prepared for the high school transition while attending their elementary/middle school and would not need to contribute to the orientation process. The average data of a 4 out of 5, with 5 being the highest on the student survey supported that students were prepared for high school. The results revealed they were prepared for the high school transition process.

Miguel spoke with the researcher about efforts his elementary/middle school made to ensure that he was prepared for high school. He also spoke about the candid conversations he had at home which attributed to his level of preparedness for high school. 'Based on the many conversations that I had with my uncle, I felt like orientation was a refresher course,' said Miguel.

Bilal and Jeffery shared with the researcher that they did not feel that they could adequately contribute to the planning process because of unanswered questions. Jeffery shared, 'I couldn't help because then that would be one person not knowing what to do trying to help someone out who doesn't know what to do and that wouldn't be good for either of us.' Mark said to the researcher that he should be able to help with the planning since his sister had gone through the process. However, 'I am not sure I have enough of the answers to help with planning, so I better stay in the audience,' said Mark.

Kaiden gave a limited response to this research question. He shared, 'I gotta figure it out first before I can help someone else.' When the researcher asked for Kaiden to elaborate, he declined to do so. Much like Kaiden, Frederick, Kymberli, and Ashlee did not provide the researcher with an in depth view of why or how they could assist in

planning the orientation. Kymberli stated, 'I've got too much goin' on at home, I am tryin' to figure things out for myself and I can't be worried about nobody else right now.'

The remaining seven student participants revealed to the researcher either they were not interested in assisting with providing input, or did not know if they were capable of giving integral information to assist with the planning of the orientation session. Aaricka shared with the researcher adamantly, 'I promise I am going to figure out how other kids don't have to do orientation.' James disclosed to the researcher that he believed that teachers should plan orientation. 'I'm not sure what me or other kids could contribute to orientation,' said James.

However, four of the 15 shared with the researcher that if asked at a later date, they would gladly assist with the planning of the orientation session. 'If given the opportunity, once I become an upperclassman, I would help plan the orientation session,' said Kameryn. Kameryn also spoke about how the potential of assisting with planning the session could be used as information on her resume and service hours. Raeshaunna spoke with the researcher about how she felt her insight into planning the session should be valued. 'I hope they ask me to help once I am a sophomore, I can help them to figure out how to put all of the information on YouTube or Skype,' said Raeshaunna. The researcher also learned that Alexzander was interested in an opportunity to assist with planning an orientation session. 'Helping to plan an orientation is a big job; but, I would be happy to do it,' said Alexzander. Madysn spoke with the researcher about her desires to assist with future planning of an orientation session. 'If I get to help with planning, I can make sure that the incoming freshman are not bored to death like we were,' said Madysn.

RQ 3 Subtheme 6: Students feelings about a need for additional supports.

One emerging theme from the student data pertained to a need to have additional supports available for students. Half of the student participants shared there was a need for HGHS to have additional supports for ninth grade students. The descriptive data from the student survey results revealed a 4 out of 5, with 5 being the highest, supported student interviews which discussed a need for additional supports within HGHS. When asked about the type of assistance needed within the school environment to assist with the transition process, the students spoke of some form of mentoring. Often times, students have a better appreciation for information shared by their peers. The students' thoughts on the need for additional support and more specifically a mentor mirrored the feelings of parent research participants. Some of the students spoke with the researcher about positive previous experiences they had with mentors. One student in particular, Ashlee divulged her experience to the researcher. Ashlee shared:

For some reason it seems like my peers can better relate to my experiences. I know that people in my family have already been in the ninth grade but it was so long ago. My friends understand how I feel and can help me figure out what to do. When I talk to adults the stuff that they say sometimes doesn't make sense.

Research Question 4: How did the process assist with dispelling any myths regarding the transition from eighth into high school?

As students and parents prepare for high school, many become overwhelmed by myths and misconceptions that potentially plague the transition to high school. Some of the myths that high school students and their parents encounter pertain to the logistics of the building. It is common for students and parents to be concerned with the potentiality of getting lost during the school day. Another myth of high school pertains to underclassmen being bullied and losing or getting their lunch taken from upperclassmen. A third myth is the number of behavioral infractions negatively impact student achievement. A final myth of high school pertains to the willingness of educators to assist struggling students and support them to ensure success.

Many of the research participants shared they appreciated the question and answer segment of the orientation. Out of eight participants, six parents felt that all of the myths and misconceptions were addressed during the orientation session. Mr. and Mrs. Dent spoke candidly about, how 'Each question asked by a different parent helped to gain a better understanding of what to expect while dispelling the myths of high school.' Mr. Young again revisited his challenges of being a single father during the interview. He shared, 'When the administration opened the floor for questions, I was excited! I remember being in school and being glad that someone asked the same question that I had,' said Mr. Young.

Mr. Campbell reiterated his concerns about high school. Many of the questions asked assisted them with addressing the myths; but Mr. and Mrs. Campbell were still in need of some clarity regarding transition. 'I didn't want to jeopardize everyone's time during orientation because we still had questions,' said Mr. Campbell. A few of the parent research participants felt it was beneficial that the Administrative team remained

once every one was dismissed. Ms. Black shared, 'I was glad that we could approach the administrators once the orientation session ended because I still had some questions.'

Ms. Carter and Ms. Williams shared the same sentiments regarding the orientation session dispelling myths about high school transition. During separate accounts, they candidly shared how the questions asked by the parents were relevant, but did not specifically speak to some of the myths they had previously heard. Ms. Carter spoke about the frequent instances of underclassmen being slammed and stuffed into lockers. 'The session did not fully discuss supervision while the kids are at school,' shared Ms. Carter.

RQ 4 Subtheme 1: Parents thoughts about teacher's willingness to assist students.

The myths that were disclosed during the parent interview pertained to teachers not willing to assist students who struggled. Parents were concerned about the perceptions that the number of negative behavioral infractions would significantly hamper their son/daughter's academic progress while not receiving the necessary assistance. Each of the parent research participants spoke about their concerns regarding the frequency of teachers communicating to parents. They all shared that the current frequency of parent contact initiated by the teachers was far below their expectancy. 'Teachers should reach out to parents when kids are doing well and especially when they are struggling academically,' shared Mr. Dent. Additionally, parents shared with the researcher the importance of teachers having consistent study sessions and tutoring.

'Bilal stays after school just about every day,' said Mr. Young. He shared with the researcher that there is no direct evidence or academic impact of Bilal staying afterschool until his grade report is available. 'I would appreciate a schedule of tutoring

sessions from Bilal's teachers,' stated Mr. Young. The descriptive data, 4 out of 5, with 5 being the highest, supported parental concerns of and a need for additional academic supports. The results of the parent survey were 4 out of an average of 5. Almost all of the parent research participants shared with the researcher a strong desire to have supports for students.

Parents shared that it was a major shock at mid-quarter to learn of the number of missing assignments in certain classes. Many of them spoke with the researcher about HGHS instituting a plan to ensure that all stakeholders remained on the same page. 'Even though all of the information is on line, I think it is better to talk or meet face to face,' shared Mrs. Dent.

RQ 4 Subtheme 2: The number of negative behavioral infractions which would hamper academic progress.

Some of the parent research participants spoke with the researcher about how society stigmatizes African American students with frequently displaying inappropriate behaviors which negatively impact the learning environment. The participants too discussed with the researcher some of their apprehensions about how African American students and parents are historically labeled as uncooperative or having a minimal desire to be successful. Mr. Dent shared, 'I get tired of our kids being labeled as trouble makers.'

Mr. and Mrs. Adams attempted to address some societal concerns and myths about African American students when speaking with the researcher during their interview. They felt that their response and access to resources had increased when

raising Mark as compared to their knowledge base when raising his sister. Mrs. Adams shared:

Since this was not our first rodeo, I was glad that I was able to shed some light on many assumed behaviors and experiences that students would encounter while in high school. We remembered how nervous we were last year and wished that more seasoned or veteran parents would have spoken up. When we suggested that the questions and answer segment should be moved closer to the beginning of the session, it was considered. There is nothing worse than sitting in an informative session with and have the strong desire to ask a question. Until you are addressed, you are not focused on the discussion.

RQ4 Subtheme 3: Students perceptions of how orientation dispelled myths.

Out of 17 participants, 15 shared that all of the myths they were exposed to prior to entering high school were addressed during the orientation for students and parents. One of the myths that emerged from the students pertained to getting lost. Another myth, which the participants later learned was false, concerned freshmen having their lunches and/or lunch money taken. A final myth that emerged from the student participants was about lack of time to complete and submit assignments. The 15 students spoke about specific examples and instances that assisted with ensuring that myths were dispelled.

There were several reports of fear, apprehensions, and concerns about entering high school from the student research participants. Many of the common themes of fear, apprehensions, and concerns about dispelling myths was that the orientation session

assisted with this process. The students had heard multiple stories about kids getting bullied, lost, and harassed while in high school.

Many of the students spoke positively about the student panel. The panel comprised of current upper-class students. The purpose was for incoming ninth grade students to make inquiries while getting essential firsthand information from their future peers. 'I appreciated the student panel and the opportunity to ask questions,' shared Jeffery.

Several of the participants were relieved to learn that the school was only two floors with the classrooms located in one main area of the building. 'I remembered during the building tour how excited I was to see that all of my classes except for P.E. were on the same end of the building,' Frederick discussed. 'I was scared about always being late and getting a detention,' he shared. 'I knew if I got too many tardies my dad would not be happy about that,' Ashlee said. She also spoke with the researcher about familial disclosures pertaining to their experience in high school. Ashlee shared, 'My family always told stories of getting lost and not getting to class on time. A couple of students felt more comfortable because of their older siblings being students at HGHS. One student, Madysn said I had 'no concerns, I was ready for high school.' Additionally, one young man, James said 'I already knew a lot of people so I was cool on coming to high school.'

James discussed his in-depth exposure to stories from his family members about getting lost. 'My cousin who attended a different school always talked about getting lost and being late to class,' shared James. Several of the students discussed how relieved they felt when they learned that they would have five minutes between classes to make it

to their next destination. 'All of the students took a tour with current upper class students,' shared Aaricka. During the tour, the students were able to ask questions. Alexander discussed, also, 'I was glad that during the first week of school, a lot of teachers were in the hallway directing us and their names were outside of their classrooms.' Alexander shared:

I knew once I pulled up to the school that I would be fine. When we were divided into groups and took a tour of the building I immediately got happy. My middle school was a lot larger than HGHS and we only had three minutes in between classes. I'm so glad I don't have to worry about being late to class anymore and hearing my mama complain about me having after school detention.

HGHS only has two floors and the all of the classes are in the same area of the building. Kymberli discussed the concept of the academic wing and how it is impossible to be late if you talked to your peers while you walk to class. 'All of our classes are in one area of the building except for the gym...if you can't get to your next class in five minutes, then something is wrong with you,' shared Kymberli. HGHS's logistics allows all classes to be confined to one area on both floors.

Darnell spoke with the researcher in great detail about his views on the transition process. His overall level of appreciation of the process was positive when he compared it to his previous exposure. Darnell stated:

At first I wasn't sure about transition time. At my old school we didn't have transition time all of the time. It depended on what grade you were in if you had transition time. The underclassmen (kindergarten-fifth

graders) had to walk from class to class with their teachers. I was so happy when I got to sixth grade and didn't have to walk in a line anymore! I felt like I was cool until I kept being late and got in trouble. Then I realized why the teachers always kept saying walk and talk. When I was in the lower grades that didn't mean nothin' to me when I would hear another teacher saying that. Then once I got into sixth grade and my daddy told me not to get no more detentions I knew what they (teachers) were talking about. Five minutes is enough time to do what we got to do.

Contrasting with the other responses of the student research participants, Kendrick and Frederick were the two students who felt that the orientation session did not address their myths about high school. Although the researcher surveyed and interviewed the two individually, their responses to the survey and interview were quite similar. Kendrick spoke candidly about the need to have more time to get to class during transition. 'There are a lot of people in the halls when we switch (classes) and I don't know how they (teachers) expect us to get to one class to the next, talk to our friends, and not be late,' disclosed Kendrick. Frederick had similar feelings about needing more time during transition. Frederick also spoke about how slow he walked and how impossible it would be to get to class on time. He shared, 'I hope they (teachers) don't give out detentions for being tardy because I will be in there (detention) everyday if that is the case.'

Results of the data indicated concerns with lunch. Many of the students spoke about hearing stories and disclaimers about kids taking their lunches and money which would hinder them from eating. They too spoke about how it was not taboo to carry

lunches for those who were coming from a private school. For students who previously attended public schools, it was common practice for a significant number of students to purchase their lunches or buy items from the snack bar or vending machines.

Kaiden shared, 'I was happy to find out that we had lunch accounts.' At HGHS parents have the capability to create a lunch account and add funds to their son/daughter's account virtually. 'My parents put money on my account every Sunday,' shared James. He also divulged that if he runs out of money before the end of the week, he is faced with not eating. He shared:

At first, I could not budget what my parents were giving me, I would run out (of money) by Thursday and have to beg my friends for some of their lunch. Once I say that they were getting mad at me, I learned how to budget. I never have to beg for money no more. Now some of my friends ask me for some of my food.

Students had concerns about the amount of time to complete and submit assignments.

Many of the students talked about the need to have a planner which outlined when assigned tasks were due. Many of them too spoke about how their previous school often allotted in class time to complete projects. Mark shared:

I cannot remember doing a lot of big assignments at home. A lot of my assignments were started and finished at school. When we did not finish them, our teacher would say that we had to finish it at home; but, then the next class we would get time to finish it. If that didn't help, I would finish it on the bus or at lunch. I remember one time when somebody spilled his

or her milk on my paper and I was given additional time to turn in my Science project.

Overall, current freshmen students at HGHS were experiencing an array of challenges throughout their first year of high school. Their challenges ranged from struggling with meeting new friends, adapting to a new logistical school setting, failing academics, and accessing resources that positively influence the level of socialization. The research participants were candid and provided the researcher with ample information to review and modify the current transition process.

Many of the students were able to provide specific examples of activities that could be implemented for future freshmen students. Another topic that arose from the interviews pertained to clubs and activities. Jeffery shared, 'If I knew what clubs were offered, then I would not have had to worry about picking between certain afterschool activities.' Accessing an adult to confide in and give you sound advice was an arising theme from the interviews. 'I wish I knew at the start of school who I could talk to when I encountered a problem at school,' Mark said.

Additional Results

All eight parent research participants had suggestions for future parents. Some of participants' suggestions mirrored those of other parent research participants. 'My word of advice for future parents is for them to understand the school environment in which their child is transitioning into,' Mr. Coleman said.

Ms. Black recommended getting involved in as many in-school activities with your child and 'make time even when your schedule will not allow!' Ms. Carter expressed a need for a support circle for grandparents who have been challenged with

raising their grandchildren. 'I'd be happy to speak to any grandparent and tell them you can do it' said Ms. Carter. Ms. Williams was very transparent in what she shared with the researcher. 'These lil girls can be messy, and because of their mess, stay on top of what your child is doing,' Ms. Williams shared. Mr. and Mrs. Dent discussed the significant difference in sending their children to high school in comparison to present day. Mr. Dent said, 'Make sure you ask a lot of questions.' 'If you don't know, rest assured there is someone [another parent] with the same question as you have,' said Mrs. Dent.

Mr. Young spoke with the researcher about the importance of parental involvement. He also shared that if given the opportunity to share some words of wisdom, he would encourage them to remain involved in their child's education. 'Bilal got tired of seeing me at the school,' Mr. Young said. He discussed the importance of parental involvement. 'I learned that the more stuff I was involved in and the frequency of my conversations with his teachers had a positive impact on the choices my son made,' discussed Mr. Young.

The disjointed, unclear, and inconsistent communication regarding the orientation session was given as a rationale of some parents as to why their child did not attend freshmen orientation. Some of the research participants revealed their thoughts on how to boost parental involvement and attendance during the orientation session. One study participant, Mrs. Dent, was able to share that she had knowledge of the expectations and outcome of orientation because of her history with HGHS last year. The parent research participants spoke specifically about how HGHS could improve communication with incoming students and parents. One suggestion pertained to sending out mass

communications to save the date. Mr. Coleman shared, 'People travel during the summer and would benefit from knowing the date of orientation more than one week in advance.'

Summary

The qualitative results were used to determine the need to reexamine the transition process. Themes from student and parent participant survey and interview results were an indicator that the current transition process is not fully meeting the needs of students and parents. Additionally, the data affords educators at His Grace High School an opportunity to begin comprehending the cultural differences and needs of the population it serves. The data furthermore provided the faculty and staff with a baseline and direction as to how to begin meeting the cultural needs of African American students and parents. Finally, this data was an integral component to the development of a transition program for African American students transitioning into the high school learning environment at an urban private high school.

Creswell (2013) discussed how qualitative studies are dependent upon themes that emerge from the collected data, which provide direction for the conclusions. The researcher used the results of the parent and student surveys and interview to begin developing a transition program that will assist parents and students with the high school transition. Chapter Five will provide a discussion of the findings, followed by some observations that were made, recommendations that could improve an orientation and transition process for African American students and suggestions for additional research.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection

Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of results from the study of African American ninth grade students transitioning from elementary/middle to high school. The chapter discusses the conclusions reached as a result of surveying and interviewing 17 ninth grade students and eight parents enrolled in an urban private high school. This study's intentions were to examine the process of transitioning African American ninth grade parents and students while using their experiences to develop a transition program. A qualitative study provided information of African American parents and students depiction of their high school transition phenomenon.

Results provided an in depth view of the transition process. The conclusions are organized by the following major findings: (a) parents' and students' feelings regarding the transition process; (b) parents' and students' feelings about how the transition process addressed their concerns; (c) parents' and students' feelings about how they could assist the transition process; and (d) parents' and students' feelings about how the transition process addressed myths concerning high school transition. An analysis of data collected yielded themes discussed in Chapter Four. Recommendations for a transition program at HGHS will also be discussed throughout this chapter. This chapter will discuss the limitations of the study. Finally, recommendations for future transition programs for African American ninth grade students transitioning into high school will also be discussed.

Phenomenology was the chosen methodology for this study because it provides a deeper understanding of the experiences of the transitioning parents and students.

Descriptive phenomenology was used to examine the individual experiences of parent and student research participants. A description of the lived experiences is a result of a thematic analysis of the parental and student surveys and interviews. Creswell (2013) shared that the best instance to use a phenomenological study is when a research problem requires an understanding of human experiences involving a common group of participants.

Data and emerging themes indicated a shared understanding of the phenomenon. "The credibility of phenomenology is in the recognition of that 'your story' resonates in 'my story'" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 6). Phenomenological reflection is retrospective as opposed to introspective and recognizes how phenomenon is experienced in our world. The participants of this study met with the researcher and shared their feelings about their experiences. Emerging themes focused on the experiences that make the nature of the phenomenon. The research participants spoke of their experiences and the researcher looked at their responses and discussed how they impacted the high school transition process.

Discussion

RQ1: How do students and parents perceive the transition process from eighth grade to high school?

The data showed that the descriptive survey results and interview responses are contradictory. The results from the descriptive survey for the parent and student research participants revealed that the transition process assisted them in transitioning from eighth grade to high school. The transition process is not as clearly defined as it needs to be. Specific entities of the process do not fully address the varied needs of the parents and

students who are required to participate in the transition process prior to the onset of the school year.

The transition process was designed to address the transitional needs of parents and students; however, without input and guidance from current parents and students, integral information is deleted from the process. Some of the parent research participants stated the process lacked the capability of addressing specific concerns which they felt were paramount to the transition process. Additionally, students also felt like their specific concerns were not addressed during the transition. Descriptive research data did not provide the research participants an opportunity to provide specific detailed information about the transition process. Each question addressed the transition process and how research participants felt.

The role of the high school transition process includes multiple tasks which can at times become convoluted. The two important focal points for the transition process according to the data indicated opportunities for parents and students to have their individual needs met and spoke to the availability of additional supports for parents and students. Many of the research participants felt that upon completion of the transition process, they left with unanswered questions.

Data also revealed there was not an identified arena for transition participants to voice their additional concerns or find answers to their queries. When the transition process does not fully meet the needs of its participants, it decreases the value of the process and the likelihood for future parents and students to participate. Ultimately, the lack of participation will have a negative impact on the successful transition of ninth grade parents and students. For instance, some of the current research participants felt

that participating in the transition process was a waste of time. If their negative feelings about the process is shared with others this information could negatively impact the number of future participants.

Some of the parent and student research participants expressed a desire to have a more structured transition process. This opinion is understandable. To be an effective process, the needs of the audience must be included in the planning and implementation.

Currently, the transition process includes the needs of the school governing body with little to no direction from the stakeholders. Failure to incorporate the needs of the audience will not be a beneficial experience for the participants. The school does not take full advantage of its autonomy to institute necessary information outside information the school requires to be included in the transition process.

Other research study participants shared with the researcher that they enjoyed the flexibility of the transition process. They felt that their needs were met collectively and for those with individual concerns, the faculty and staff were available to provide additional assistance. The participants spoke about how they appreciated an opportunity to learn the logistics of the building, learn about the availability of school and community partners, and the ability to network with and meet new peers.

Overall, the experiences of parents and students transitioning into the high school environment reflect the personal experience of the researcher. Although the transition process can be tumultuous for some, implementing culturally sensitive supports and resources, while ensuring the needs of the parents and students are being met can be a positive result of an effective transition plan.

RQ2: How do students and parents feel the school assisted them with the high school transition process?

The data revealed a gap in how parents and students felt about how the school assisted them with the transition process. The descriptive survey data showed mixed feelings among the parent and student research participants. Parental survey results revealed HGHS parents of ninth grade students felt fully supported during the transition process. The parent interviews revealed thoughts pertaining to the level of support HGHS provided during the transition process. Parents shared they felt students were supported. Parent interview results which revealed gaps in the level of support during the transition also yielded concrete examples for the school which could assist parents with transitioning. The parents shared with the researcher positive feelings about how the orientation session assisted with the transition. Additionally, the parents felt that the orientation session afforded them an opportunity to have an open arena where parents could receive information about the transition process.

However, one theme that emerged from the results pertained to parents' feelings about a need for ongoing support throughout the school year for all students. Parent research participants believed that ongoing support was needed as their son/daughter transitioned into the high school learning environment in addition to the provided orientation session. The consistent theme that emerged when analyzing the parent responses was schools need to work at providing additional assistance and support to the parents.

Although the data supported the parent and student beliefs that the school assisted them with the transition process, it revealed that parents and students felt the level of

support provided by the school could have been increased. For instance, parental data shared that parents appreciated receiving essential information concerning the transition process; however, they too spoke of a need to have additional clarity regarding some topics. Moreover, student data results supported a need for the school to increase the level of support given to transitioning students. For example, students spoke in their interviews about having specific concerns addressed; but were not provided with opportunities to fully express themselves and receive answers to all of their queries.

Change can be difficult for all. When individuals experience change, their response often depends on the level of support. Implementation of essential tools and support can assist individuals with a seamless transition. Ongoing consistent support networks for parents and students also will allow for a seamless transition.

The researcher supports the feelings of the parent and student research participants. The current transition process does not fully address the concerns of the transitioning parent and student as it is implemented. The material shared with all participants is generic in form which should be modified to meet the cultural needs of its population and desired audience.

RQ 3: How can students and parents assist the school with the high school transition process?

The data from the parents and students did not reveal a gap in how parents and students felt they could assist the school with the transition process. All of the research participants felt that with input from all stakeholders, the transition process could be more effective and meet the needs of the population.

The results from the parental interviews revealed to the researcher that parents felt the school community should be a part of the planning process. They indicated parent participation as an opportunity to build open lines of communication and increase the strength of a positive school community. Additionally, this participation would positively contribute to the number of opportunities for parents to become involved in the level of academic attainment for their child. Data from the parental interviews shared that parents felt they could assist the school by ensuring effective communication. All of the parental research participants who spoke about communication felt that strong communication was essential to a seamless high school transition. Student research participant data shared that students also felt they could assist with a seamless high school transition process if they were included in the planning process. Students felt it was important to gain their insight regarding the planning of transition activities. Allowing students to contribute to the planning process would meet the needs of student stakeholders.

Finally, both parent and student research participant data revealed a significant need to provide all transition participants with additional supports and resources. Providing additional supports would be another opportunity to meet the cultural needs of the stakeholders. A segment of the literature review revealed students are often successful in the learning environment when all stakeholders are afforded opportunities to contribute and be an active participant in the learning environment. Mac Iver (1990) discussed helping students succeed in high school entails including programs and activities to assist with gaining knowledge of the transition process.

Overall, more students felt they would rely on the expertise of the educators and school community to plan and implement a transition program for rising ninth grade students. They felt it would be difficult for them to contribute to effectively planning an experience they had not previously encountered. Moreover, the descriptive data from the student survey results confirmed that the student research participants felt they were not prepared to contribute to the orientation process.

RQ 4: How did the transition process assist with dispelling any myths regarding the transition from eighth grade into high school?

As parents and students prepare for the high school transition, myths and misconceptions often plague their ability to successfully transition. Data from the parental research revealed that the transition process dispelled myths regarding the transition. The myths that parents spoke of pertained to the safety and logistics of the building and the level of support provided by educators to promote academic achievement. They shared during the transition process stakeholders were able to ensure the physical and emotional safety of their child.

The parental data revealed concerns regarding educators providing information regarding assistance for students. The parents consistently spoke of a need for educators to be available for students prior to, during, and after the academic day. A significant amount of parental data revealed that some educators were available to assist students who encountered academic difficulty; however, their availability was not consistent. Additionally, data indicated that parents were also concerned about the level of rigor being provided to students in the learning environment. A final concern from parents

pertained to the level of effectiveness and ability for educators outside of the African American culture possessing the ability to relate culturally to the students they served.

The myths of the student research participants mirrored those of the parent research participants. However, the student research data revealed more than half of the participants felt the transition process dispelled the myths of high school. Students who felt the myths were not addressed spoke with the researcher and shared there was not an opportunity to specifically address individual myths. Overall, the students who indicated myths were not addressed felt reassured that other common myths were addressed during the transition.

The researcher agrees with the feelings of the parent and student research participants. This is a strong area where HGHS meets the needs of transitioning parents and students. Essential information regarding the transition process as it specifically pertains to a traditional high school setting is discussed during transition which affords stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss historical high school concerns. However, the researcher feels that it is imperative for HGHS to implement processes and procedures that fully address the academic support concerns which historically arise during the transition process.

A Breakdown of Phenomenological Factors

Throughout the transitional period, the parents and student research participants experienced an array of emotions. Research participant responses to the interview questions indicated their feelings and emotions. The participants adamantly spoke with the researcher about their feelings and emotions. At other times during the process, their feelings and emotions were revealed through body language and their speaking patterns.

For instance, when responding to interview questions, research participants used their hands to place a greater emphasis on their words. Additionally, parents would stress certain points and phrases by having a higher tone when expressing their thoughts.

Frustration was the one common emotion shared by the parental and student research participants. Participants specifically spoke about being frustrated at various points of the orientation process. Many of them referred to their increased frustration when individual questions about the orientation process were not addressed by the session and/or members of the faculty and staff not providing integral insight. Student research participants spoke about their frustrations while being unable to receive information from former and current HGHS students about the transition process.

Fear was a second emotion parent and student research participants exhibited during the transition process. Parents spoke about being fearful about the level of support their child would receive when transitioning into HGHS and throughout the school year. Parental fear also pertained to students getting involved with peers having a negative influence on the behavioral choices of their son/daughter. A final aspect of parental fear entailed the potential of educators and the school environment not meeting the cultural needs of its students.

Student research participants' experiences with fear related to the level of academic rigor and their own skills to be successful in high school. The students were also fearful of not meeting the spoken and unspoken expectations of their parents. Some of the research participants had siblings who were currently enrolled in HGHS. Those students with older peers spoke about being fearful of performing at a level which was not equivalent to their siblings. Finally, student fears related to the inability of

individuality. They spoke with the researcher candidly about being compared to their older siblings and/or not being a positive role model for their younger siblings.

Another emotion from parents and students transitioning into ninth grade was anxiety. Parental research participants spoke of being anxious as to what specific challenges their child would encounter as they transitioned. Some of the parent participants' level of anxiousness originated from previous interactions and experiences with the high school transition process and individuals who'd transitioned. For instance, parents spoke with the researcher about their level of anxiety about their child encountering specific educators and their response to students.

Student research participants spoke of similar levels of anxiety. The students were anxious about being accepted by their classmates, peers, and members of the faculty and staff. Students also were anxious regarding the capability of educators from other ethnic groups to address their culture needs. An increased level of anxiety evolved when students spoke about the myths of high school. The student interviews revealed concerns about how the school would make students feel safe and address instances of students being placed in challenging situations regarding their peer interactions.

The fourth emotion of the parent research participants was uncertainty. Parents had questions about the overall transition process. Some of the parents spoke about the necessity to have structured information. According to the parents, providing structured information would allow them to be involved as the process evolved.

Parental and student feelings of uncertainty remained as they had questions about how HGHS would respond to their needs when faced with difficult situations. Nervousness was another emotion that was coupled with the uncertainty. Many of the

research participants were new to HGHS and needed justification regarding the level of support children who transitioned would receive. Parents too wanted justification that consistent ongoing support would be available for parents and students as they continued transitioning.

The school could respond to the phenomenon of African American ninth grade transition by implementing several action steps that would assist with easing the mindset of the research participants. One step should entail implementing consistent communication measures. When consistent and open communication exists the likelihood of misconceiving information decreases. Open and consistent communication ensures that all stakeholders receive the same information and are one accord.

The school could address parent and student phenomenon emotions by soliciting the assistance of members of the Therapeutic Department. These individuals have access to resources and tools which can assist research participants with increasing their level of comfort. The Therapeutic Department could incorporate additional transition services and informational sessions that address the overall needs of the research participants. Finally, the school could address this phenomenon by instituting mentoring and peer supports for all stakeholders. Mentoring groups and peer supports would allow research participants to align with members of their peer group who could guide them through the transition process. These supports could also have an overall positive contribution on the learning and school environment.

Suggestions for Future HGHS Transition Programs

The research results suggest the model for future HGHS transition programs should address communication structure, involvement of stakeholders, presentation

methods, and additional opportunities. Incorporating these elements is in an effort to address the needs of transitioning African American ninth grade parents and students. These elements will ensure a seamless transition into high school for African American ninth grade students and their parents.

The overall communication structure of the orientation process should be consistent, time sensitive, and clear. Reaching out to stakeholders prior to the close of their eighth grade year is essential based on data from parent research participants. Dorman (2012) supported schools having a level of parental involvement to ensure that students are successful and transition is seamless. Scheduling the orientation session must occur prior to the close of the previous school year. Once a date for the parent and student orientation session is scheduled, the information should be quickly communicated with elementary/middle school parents and students. When stakeholders are afforded ample time to schedule an event, the possibility of a higher attendance rate increases. Additionally, this decreases the probability of stakeholders having schedule conflicts.

Ongoing, transparent, and consistent communication with the faculty and staff of the school should be included in the planning and implementation of the transition process. Once established, the home and school environment can work collectively to ensure that the needs of the student are being met. Effective communication will lead to all stakeholders ensuring that tools and strategies are being implemented to guide students towards attaining optimal success. Finally, ongoing, transparent, and consistent communication will allow all stakeholders an opportunity to remain abreast of any changes and/or outside influences that may negatively hamper academic achievement.

Transition programs and orientation sessions should include information that is relevant to the specific needs of the population it serves. Traditionally, schools plan and implement programs and sessions without input from its potential participants. Schools should work with incoming parents and students to identify specific needs and topics for discussion. The research data revealed a significant number of participants felt their specific questions were not addressed. HGHS could work to survey students and parents prior to orientation to develop potential discussion topics during the sessions. Additionally, when HGHS staff may speak with parents regarding needs while working to enroll incoming students.

Culturally sensitive topics are another integral component to the transition process. Speaking with parents and students about current issues they face will assist with establishing open communication while ensuring parents that all stakeholders are willing to work and meet the needs of the students they serve. Kelly, Ryan, Altman, and Stelzner (2000) addressed how paying special attention to how environments impact individuals and the interactions between environments and individuals influence adaptation. Solomon (1989) investigated the impact of racial stereotyping upon African American students' high school experiences. Additionally, he argued that minority students receive systematic different treatment by their educators based on their beliefs and stereotypes. Furthermore, these stereotypes can hamper how educators interact with their students and ultimately have lower expectations for their level of achievement. Holcomb-McCoy (2007) shared that schools perform a disservice by creating self-doubt in African American students and perpetuating existing social inequalities between minorities and Caucasian students.

HGHS should work to provide opportunities to build relationships with all parents with a concentrated focus on those whose child has successfully transitioned into the high school environment. Providing relationship building opportunities allows parents to begin networking and creating positive relationships which may ultimately have a positive impact on the overall culture of the school. Building relationships can also be a catalyst to developing coping skills and strategies to minimize the level of stressors. Relationship building may encourage self-reflections of how parental actions may contribute to a child's level of academic success. Relationship building may encourage parents to take an introspective look into their own actions and level of positive and negative influence a parent may have on their child.

The school should work with the parents and students transitioning to establish realistic expectations. A collaborative effort to identify appropriate expectations and goals for their child would assist with a seamless transition. This effort may additionally minimize the number of distractions of the transitioning child. With the assistance of the school, parents are encouraged to assist the child and parent with identification of any behaviors which will negatively impede the transition process. Furthermore, parents and students should be encouraged to collectively identify appropriate responses to those negative behaviors. Instituting this process could have a positive influence on transitioning.

Limitations

This study was limited by a few factors. First, time was a limitation of this study. At the time of the study, the participants had already completed one full semester of their freshman year of high school. Although many of the research participants spoke about

transitional challenges, their experience may have been more difficult at the onset of the school year. The timing of the study may have skewed the results.

A second limitation of the study was at the time of the study, the researcher unintentionally displayed bias towards some interview questions. The researcher was an administrator at HGHS and had access to sensitive information concerning the orientation session and transition process. The researcher was privy to detailed information concerning which students struggled with transitioning. Additionally, the researcher had access to information regarding how the school supported students who struggled with the transition.

The next limitation of the study pertained to the number of participants. There were 94 ninth grade students enrolled at HGHS. However, the researcher only secured 25 participants. Seventeen of the participants were students and the remaining eight were parents of ninth grade students. Securing an increased number of participants could have provided the researcher with a more accurate view of the transition process. A final limitation of the study pertained to the level of transparency the research participants disclosed. Some of the responses of the participants were limited concerning their feelings in response to the survey and interview questions. The researcher's relationship with the participants impacted how transparent some of the research participants were when they responded to the survey and interview questions.

Recommendations for High School Transition Programs

Transition Programs Should Consider:

1. Consistently reflecting on the cultural values, passions, and actions to determine the gap between the needs of students and families and how the

school addresses them. Once established, the school can work with parents to develop strategies to decrease the gap. Likewise, parents should be encouraged to take a look into their values, passions, and actions. When looking into their cultural values, passions, and actions, parents should be encouraged to work with the school to seek a shared understanding.

2. Managing resources to allow parents and stakeholders to access the learning environment to assist students with attaining maintaining success.
3. Establishing realistic expectations and defining tools and resources to implement and afford parents and students the opportunity to have a successful transition.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research is recommended to expound the scope of this study. African American parents and students need transition programs that meet the specific cultural needs of the students and parents. Based on the study's limited scope, the researcher recommends the following to further verify the research findings:

1. Twenty-five research participants were involved in the research study. Eight parents and 17 students were the focus of this study. Replication of this study should occur with an increased number of participants to compare research findings. Additional research participants could provide more insight about the orientation process and areas of improvement.
2. This study solicited experiences and perspectives of African American ninth grade parents and students through surveys and interviews. Perspectives and experiences of educators associated with the transition process is unknown. The

inclusion of others in this study such as classroom educators of ninth grade students would afford an opportunity for the data to be triangulated. Allowing other perspectives and experiences of educators who work directly with students would provide a more in depth view of how students respond to the transition inside of the academic setting. These perspectives and experiences may also shed light on areas of growth.

3. The gender of the research participants in this study was not equally divided. Comparative studies which targeted equivalent male and female parent and student participants would add another dimension to the research. The transition experiences for males and females varied when compared to one another.
4. Student participants in this study were from both private and public elementary/middle school settings. Future studies may focus specifically on research participants only from either a private or public school. Prior preparation for high school transition varies when comparing transition from public and private sectors.
5. Research participants completed the surveys and interviews at the conclusion of first semester or beginning of second semester. This is a time when parents and students are more acclimated to the high school learning environment and face less challenges. For future studies, it is recommended that the survey and interview process occur closer to the onset of the ninth grade academic year. Participating in the research closer to the onset of the school year may have a different impact on the results of the parental and student participants.

6. The researcher was an administrator in the research setting. This position may have had an impact on the results of the survey and interview and level of transparency of the research participants. Future research studies should allow research participants to be interviewed by a member of the faculty or staff who has minimal influence on the child's progress. Administering the surveys and interviews from a neutral party could include more candid views of the transition process. A neutral party administering the surveys and interviews could also address concerns of inappropriate responses.

Conclusion

High school should be an exciting time in a child's life. However, often times ninth grade students and parents are bogged down with numerous concerns and challenges that impede a seamless high school transition. When effective tools, resources, and culturally sensitive procedures are implemented in the high school transition, the number of students seamlessly transitioning into the high school learning environment increases. Historically, school systems that serve a predominately African American population have not implemented activities and resources that provide those students with adequate support; yet, they have the same expectations as transitioning students from other ethnic groups. When students are given supports and resources that fully address their needs, they excel. As educators, it is our duty to ensure that all students receive the necessary resources to attain success.

Educators must be sensitive to the needs of all students. This study did not depict all students who struggled transitioning into the high school environment. However, disjointed ninth grade high school transition is common throughout the educational

system. Parents and students voluntarily participated in this study and the level of difficulty they encountered during the transition varied. Historically, struggling ninth grade students are negatively impacted in their remaining high school careers.

Transitioning students and families should be supported by culturally sensitive transition programs that will assist with a seamless process.

In conclusion, the researcher's understanding is that the level of pressure parents and students encountered during the transition process often has a negative impact on the transition process. The transition process must include insight from both parents and students to ensure that the needs of the transitioning parent and student are met.

Including parents and students in the planning process will also ensure that the cultural needs are additionally met. It is obvious that HGHS continues to miss the mark when working to meet the needs of its students and parents as they transition. As a result of the findings, HGHS should plan and implement a transition program that fully meets the needs of African American parents and students as they transition into an urban private school.

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Appendix A

Parent Interview

1. Did your son/daughter attend 2016-17 Freshman Orientation?
2. Prior to your son/daughter attending 2016-17 Freshman Orientation, did you have any fears, apprehensions, and/or concerns about them entering high school as a ninth grade student?

If yes, specifically, what were your fears, apprehensions, and/or concerns

3. Did any of the information discussed during the 2016-17 Parent Orientation address your fears, apprehensions, and/or concerns about your son/daughter entering high school as a ninth grade student?

If yes, specifically, what information discussed, addressed your fears, apprehensions, and/or concerns

4. What kind of support, if any, do you think would better assist your child with transitioning into high school?
5. How concerned are you about your student's grade in their classes?
6. How often do you perceive yourself assisting your child with their assignments?
7. How often do you perceive yourself checking Skyward?
8. Do you think your child would benefit from an upperclassmen mentor?
9. Do you think your child would benefit from an adult mentor?
10. What was your biggest concern about your child transitioning to high school?
11. How often did you feel stressed or anxious about your child transitioning into high school?

12. Name one thing that you would tell the parent(s) of an incoming freshman about the high school transition process.
13. Name one thing that you would have wanted the staff to share with you as you prepared your child to transition into high school.
14. Name one thing that you would have wanted the staff to discuss during freshman orientation that would have better prepared you to assist your child with the transition that was not discussed.
15. How often do you communicate with your child's teacher(s), whether in person, by phone, by e-mail, or some other way?
16. What are your fears or concerns about your child in this year of school?

Appendix B

Parent survey

Please respond to each statement using a Likert scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest and 1 being the lowest.

1. My child is prepared for high school _____
2. My child's elementary/middle school prepared him/her for high school _____
3. I was concerned about my child making friends in high school _____
4. I was concerned about my child being bullied in high school _____
5. I was concerned about my child getting lost in high school _____
6. My child is more concerned about high school than I am _____
7. My child is comfortable with finding a peer who can listen to him/her in high school _____
8. My child is comfortable with finding an adult who can listen to him/her in high school _____
9. I am concerned about the work load for my child in high school _____
10. I am comfortable with my child identifying and participating in extra-curricular activities that will assist him/her with being a well-rounded person in high school _____

Appendix C

Student Interview

1. Did you attend 2016-17 Freshman Orientation?
2. Prior to attending 2016-17 Freshman Orientation, did you have any fear, apprehensions, and/or concerns about entering high school as a ninth grade student?

If yes specifically, what were your fears, apprehensions, and/or concerns
3. Did any of the information discussed during the 2016-17 Freshman Orientation address your fears, apprehensions, and/or concerns about entering high school as a ninth grade student?

If yes specifically, what information discussed, addressed your fears, apprehensions, and/or concerns
4. What was your biggest concern about transitioning into high school?
5. How often do you feel stress or anxiety related to transitioning into high school?
6. What kind of support, if any, do you think would better assist you with transitioning into high school?
7. Do you think you would benefit from an upperclassmen mentor?
8. Do you think you would benefit from an adult educator mentor?
9. How concerned are you about your grade in your classes?
10. How often do you receive help on class assignments?
11. How often do you receive help on homework assignments?
12. How often do you check Skyward to check your grade in your classes?
13. Name one thing that you would tell an incoming freshman about their transition to high school
14. Name one thing that you would have wanted the staff to share with you as you prepared to transition to high school

15. Name one thing that you would have wanted the staff to discuss during freshman orientation that would have better prepared you to transition to high school that was not discussed.

Appendix D

Student Survey

Please respond to each statement using a Likert scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest and 1 being the lowest.

1. I was prepared for high school _____
2. My elementary/middle school prepared me to transition into high school

3. I was concerned about making friends in high school _____
4. I was concerned about being bullied in high school _____
5. I was concerned about getting lost in high school _____
6. I am more concerned about being high school than my parents _____
7. I am comfortable with finding a peer who can listen to me in high school

8. I am comfortable with finding an adult who can listen to me in high school

9. I am concerned about the work load of high school _____
10. I am comfortable with identifying and participating in extra-curricular activities

Vitae

Syreeta Rena Holland is currently the Building Principal at Old North Elementary School within Confluence Charter School District. She has been in the field of education for more than 15 years. Her college educational experience include: Central Missouri State University, Bachelor of Science in Therapeutic Recreation (1999); Lindenwood University, Master of Arts in Professional Counseling, Master of Arts in School Counseling, Master of Arts in Education, Master of Arts in Educational Administration, and an EdD in Instructional Leadership (2017). Holland's educational experience began in the St. Louis Public School District where she was a Special Education Teacher. She later moved to the Hazelwood School District to pursue School Counseling. Her next assignment was within the St. Louis Archdiocese as an Administrator at Cardinal Ritter College Preparatory High School.