Spring 5-2010

Freshman Transition and its Effectiveness on Student Success as Measured by Improved Attendance, Improved Grades, Decreased Discipline Referrals, and Decreased Dropout Rate

Jana Lea Thornsberry
Lindenwood University

Freshman Transition and its Effectiveness on Student Success as Measured by Improved Attendance, Improved Grades, Decreased Discipline Referrals, and Decreased Dropout Rate

by

Jana Lea Thornsberry
May 2010

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

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 the Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Jana Lea Thornsberry

Signature: Jana Lea Thornsberry

Date: 4-12-10

A Dissertation

Freshman Transition and its Effectiveness on Student Success as Measured by Improved Attendance, Improved Grades, Decreased Discipline Referrals, and Decreased Dropout Rate

By

Jana Lea Thornsberry

This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

Terry Stewart
Dr. Terry Stewart, Dissertation Chair — April 8, 2010
Date

Dr. Jeff Beiswinger
Dr. Jeff Beiswinger, Committee Member — April 8, 2010
Date

Sherrie Wisdom
Dr. Sherrie Wisdom, Committee Member — April 8, 2010
Date

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my husband Jeffrey. He has been with me throughout this long process while I completed my degree. Your encouragement, support, and patience throughout this process have not gone unnoticed. To my three children, Christopher, Jena, and Ty, thank you for tolerating my long nights and days working on this study, which took me away from time that I could have spent with each of you.

I dedicate this study to my parents, Herman and Pauline Payne. Thank you for always challenging and setting high expectations for me. Your guidance, family values, and work ethic have made me become the person I am today.

I would also like to dedicate this study to the late Dr. James C. Thornsberry. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to begin my journey as a teacher and to continue the journey as an administrator. Your guidance, strength, and devotion to your family and school district were tremendous. You were a wonderful person and a great leader whom I admire!

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following individuals for their help, guidance, and support throughout my journey towards my Doctor of Education. I acknowledge the Lindenwood faculty, including Mr. John Feely, for his support, motivation, and confidence in me as I worked towards my educational goals at Lindenwood University; Dr. Terry Stewart, for his willingness to serve as my committee chair and provide guidance throughout this process and for the countless hours of phone conferences in the final stages; Dr. Michael Prater and Dr. Sherrie Wisdom, who assisted me in establishing the data collection and dissertation methodology. Finally, I acknowledge and thank Mrs. Jennifer Strauser, for time she devoted to proofreading my chapters and offering suggestions to strengthen my writing; Dr. Jeffrey Beiswinger and Stephanie Mountain, for serving as committee members and providing suggestions during the writing of my dissertation. Your leadership and friendship has guided me through this process.

Abstract

Research on freshman transition programs suggests the need for a transition program that assists students as they enter high school. Many freshman transition programs consist of a visit from the high school counselors or a tour of the school. These programs do not help meet the needs of many students who will need constant support throughout the school year. The study school implemented a freshman transition program to help meet the needs of students academically and emotionally.

The purpose of this study was to determine if the implementation of a freshman transition program would make a difference in student success in high school, as measured by improved attendance, improved grades in all subjects, a decrease in discipline referrals, and a decrease in dropout rate.

The school district of study established four building goals to; a) increase student attendance and grade point average, b) decrease dropout rate and student disciplines, c) create a positive school climate, and d) expand leadership roles and opportunities for students. To meet these goals, the district implemented a freshman transition program.

The data was collected during a five year span, from the 2003 school year through 2008 school year. At the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, a freshman transition program was implemented by the school district. During the previous school years, the district did not have a transition program in place. District records from the school of study were examined for office referrals, student grades, attendance, and dropout rates. The means of the study groups were compared using a *z*-test.

The results from this study found that a freshman transition program showed improvement only in student dropout rate. In the second year of implementation, the school of study had zero dropouts. Attendance rates, grades, and discipline rates did not show improvement. The researcher suggests that the freshman transition program be reviewed after the program has been in place for several school years.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter I—Introduction

Background

John F. Kennedy said, "Our task is not to fix the blame for the past, but to fix the course for the future" (Caruana, 2004, p. 16). An effective school is one where all children can learn and where teachers and administrators prepare students for the future. An effective school needs to provide a safe environment with parent and community involvement, strong instructional leadership, and high expectations for students (Smith, 2006). Administrators' roles have changed in the past decade from management roles to an instructional one. In the past, the administrator made sure that the school's day-to-day operations ran smoothly. Today, the administrator is more involved in curriculum and assessment focusing on the instructional leader's role (Scherer, 2002, p. 5).

A Nation at Risk was published in 1983 and led to an increase in concern about the quality of K-12 education (Shaughnessy, 2008). The report focused attention on critical skills that students should be able to acquire. The skills included in the report were reading, math, and science. There were also concerns regarding the decline in student performance in reading and math. "*A Nation at Risk* also called for dramatically improved efforts to measure and track student performance and to ensure teacher quality. These measures, of course, ultimately proved to be the core principles of No Child Left Behind" (Shaughnessy, 2008, p. 1).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002 and focused on school districts' accountability for student achievement (McLeod, D'Amico, & Protheroe 2003). NCLB required states to develop assessments at certain grade levels. School districts then looked at adequate yearly progress (AYP) to see if the district had achieved goals set by NCLB. NCLB required states to establish targets in the following ways:

- Annual Proficiency Target: A target set for all students and student subgroups to meet in a progressive nature that would result in all students scoring at the proficient level on the state's assessment by 2014.
- Attendance /Graduation Rates: The law requires schools, districts and states to meet an additional indicator based on improvement or established targets in attendance and/or graduation rates.
- Participation Rates: The law requires all students and student subgroups to meet a 95% participation rate (MODESE, Data Analysis and Reporting, 2008).

The legislation also made school districts more aware of student achievement in certain subgroups, such as free and reduced lunch, race, ethnicity, Individual Education Plan (IEP) students and English Language Learners (ELL). By the year 2013-2014, school districts are expected to have all students achieving at the proficient level of academic achievement set by NCLB (McLeod, D'Amico, & Protheroe, 2003). School districts that fail to meet AYP standards are subject to sanctions by the federal government as well as a risk of losing credibility status for graduating seniors, and a portion of state and federal funding. Missouri's AYP targets were established by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) based on a formula developed from the NCLB Act and an

analysis of Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) data, attendance rate data, and graduation rate data from prior years. The requirements of AYP are considered to be met when a school district has met or surpassed the target that is set each school year (MODESE, Understanding Your Adequate Yearly Progress Report, 2008).

Due to the standards set by NCLB, school districts are constantly challenged to raise student achievement. However, many districts were experiencing no improvement or a decline in student achievement (MODESE, Understanding Your Adequate Yearly Progress Report, 2008). Educators must consider effect strategies to continue to ensure all students are learning in all sub-groups. "In focusing attention on student populations that historically were left behind academically, NCLB recognized that allowing poor and minority students to fail academically is the worst kind of discrimination" (Futrell & Gomez, 2008, p. 74). NCLB mandates that districts will exhibit measureable progress towards meeting AYP, but individual states are responsible for the consequences that will be given to each school district. One report stated that "Six years after NCLB was signed into law, however, there is scant evidence that it has improved students' academic achievement" (Futrell & Gomez, 2008, p. 74).

The State of Missouri, as reported in May 2008 by school data listed on DESE's website, currently is not meeting standards in Communication Arts and Math as measured by AYP (MODESE, 2008). To find a process to combat this, administrators and teachers were reviewing data such as dropout rate, grades, discipline incidents, and attendance rates. Many students who are transitioning from middle school to high school struggle in these areas, and the new accountability from NCLB forced districts to develop and implement interventions to help transition students (Yates, 2003).

Student's Freshman Year

A student's freshman year is a critical year. "Students will decide during the first few weeks of their freshman year if they intend to continue their high school education" (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999 p. 27). Research has shown that students who have poor attendance fall into the at risk group of students. Whereas, freshman students that maintain a 95% or above attendance rate will show success in school and graduate high school.

As students transition from middle school to high school, a decline in grades and attendance is a common experience. Anafara and Schmid (2007) stated, "transitioning is about being caught in the vortex of changing demands and we need to create schools that can effectively address the academic and psychosocial development of young adolescents" (p. 65). This may be partially explained by fears of hazing, having more difficult work, making lower grades, and getting lost in the shuffle (Anafara & Schmid). Adolescents have a need for friendships but are often split from old friends because of scheduling difficulties. "Loss of self-concept may be the result; therefore, providing opportunities for a sense of belonging and connectedness is important" (Anafara & Schmid, p.62).

"Effective transition programs typically are defined as ones that improve student attendance, achievement, and retention" (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006, p. 18). A transition program provides activities for incoming students such as visiting the new school, offering social and academic activities, meeting the counselors and teachers, and visiting the classrooms. Transition programs from middle to high school level seek to create much-needed successful social, academic, and educational and career planning

experiences (Anafara & Schmid, 2007). Activities for the transition program implemented at the school of study were selected to encourage bonding amongst the incoming freshmen and assist them in developing a positive image of high school and of themselves in the high school environment.

Research has shown that students entering high school often struggle (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Their attendance and grades decline, which leads to an increase in dropout rates (Chapman & Sawyer, 2001). “More than 1.2 million U. S. high school student’s dropout every year---roughly 7,000 each school day” (Wise, 2008, p. 8). One area this study focused on was the dropout rate for the school of study. The following table shows the dropout rate for the State of Missouri and the study district for the past five years:

Table 1

Dropout Rate for the State of Missouri and the school of study

Missouri	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total	3.3	3.4	3.7	4.0	4.2
Asian	1.4	1.1	1.5	1.7	2.7
Black	5.3	5.2	6.3	7.3	8.1
Hispanic	5.2	5.3	5.0	6.0	7.9
Indian	4.0	3.5	5.0	6.5	4.9
White	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.3	3.2
Study School	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total	4.7	4.9	4.2	4.6	1.7
Asian	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Black	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hispanic	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Indian	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
White	4.7	4.9	4.2	4.6	1.7

Note. From Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2008) reported Missouri's dropout rate was 4.0% in 2006 and 4.2% in 2007. As seen in Table 1, the study district had a dropout rate of 4.6% in 2006 and 1.7% in 2007. The data reflects a decrease of 2.9% in the dropout rate following the implementation of a transition program at the study school. This study researched the effectiveness of the transition

program by examining student's attendance rate, grades, number of discipline referrals, and dropout rate. "As researchers work to understand why students are dropping out of school, there is a concern over whether transition programs are effective" (Smith, 2007, p. 74).

Middle school students often have programs available to them for extra support, both academically and personally (Hertzog, 2006). These programs involve tutoring, parental involvement, peer grouping, advisory or homeroom periods, and individual counseling; however, when students enter high school they often lose this support (Hertzog, 2006). Parental involvement declines as students advance in grade level. High school schedules may not allow for an advisory period or homeroom period, and individual counseling usually declines due to the large number of students in a high school setting (Lampert, 2005).

Freshman Transition Program

The freshmen transition program called Link Crew was developed by Phil Boyte in 1999. The study school discovered the program when a group of teachers attended a professional development conference in 2005. The study school had been exploring options for students that entered high school and struggled academically and emotionally. Administrators were aware that if students were successful their freshman year, there was a higher rate of graduation and fewer students' dropping out of school. When the Link Crew program was reviewed, the study school administrative team recognized the positive impact this program would have on student success by reducing the number of D's and F's, reducing the dropout rate, reducing the number of discipline referrals, and increasing the attendance rate.

The freshman transition program was structured around the following outcomes: 1) increase student attendance and grade point average, 2) decrease dropout rate and student disciplines, 3) create a positive school climate, and 4) expand leadership roles and opportunities for students. To meet these goals, the district implemented a freshman transition program.

School districts that have implemented the program have submitted data supporting the positive effects of the program. For example, North Farmington High School, located in Farmington Hills, Michigan, showed a 30% reduction in absences, 24% reduction in overall discipline referrals, and 19% reduction in freshmen that received F's (Jacobson, 2009).

Problem Statement

Currently in education, schools are mandated to meet guidelines of NCLB. School districts that do not meet the established standards are at risk of losing credibility status for graduating students as well as a portion of federal and state funding. The school of study placed emphasis on student success as defined by grades, attendance rate, number of discipline referrals, and dropout rate. Therefore, a study to show whether a relationship exists between students who participated in a freshman transition program and students who did not participate in a freshman transition program would be beneficial to the school of study. The purpose of this study was to determine if the implementation of a freshman transition program would make a difference in student success in school, as measured by improved attendance rate, improved grades in all subjects, a decrease in the number of discipline referrals, and a decrease in dropout rate.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale for this study was to determine if a freshman transition program may have a direct, positive effect on student attendance, dropout rate, number of discipline referrals, and grades (lowering the number of D's and F's). By examining the freshman transition program, this study indicated that a freshman transition program showed an increase in student academic achievement and an increase in attendance, decrease in the number of discipline referrals and decrease in dropout rate. This study benefited students, administrators, counselors, and teachers by helping them understand the importance of identifying students who struggle in these areas.

Districts have looked at alternative ways to help improve student achievement such as hosting open library, mandatory tutoring, academic labs, or meeting with a school counselor. This study focused on examining grades, the number of discipline incidents, attendance rate, and dropout rate. Districts should examine freshman transition programs when looking at these issues. Districts should also look at the cost of these programs when making decisions.

School administrators, counselors, and teachers must take responsibility for student success. Mizzelle stated, "With the proper resources and support, the impact of a freshmen transition program goes beyond a student's freshmen year in high school" (2005, p. 58). When students are able to enjoy school by improving grades, positive growth in students' attitudes and behaviors may be part of the outcome.

Transition programs at the high school level create successful social, academic, and education or career planning experiences for students, but only if the program is successful. A freshman transition program provided students with an awareness that

people care about them. Students who have positive experiences their first year in high school are more likely to experience success. Positive experience can come from participation in school clubs, organizations, athletics, teacher-student relationships, etc (Mizzelle, 2005).When students are "linked" with an upperclassman, and they are exposed to extracurricular activities, the students will join the activity. Students that participate in after-school activities have a higher success rate for staying in school.

Hypotheses

To determine the effect of a freshman transition program on student success, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis #1. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in attendance will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Hypothesis #2. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in grades will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Hypothesis #3. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of discipline referrals will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Hypothesis #4. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of dropouts will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

The following null hypothesis was proposed:

Null hypothesis #1. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in attendance will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Null hypothesis #2. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in grades will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Null hypothesis #3. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of discipline referrals will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Null hypothesis #4. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of dropouts will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Research Questions

This study asked two questions about the effect of the transition program:

- Will implementation of a transition program result in increased academic success and increased attendance rate?
- Will implementation of a transition program result in decreased dropout rate and decrease in the number of discipline referrals?

The study school has a student population of approximately 750 students. The freshman class ranged from 170-220 students during the five year span. The continued increase in dropout rate at the study school prompted administrations, counselors, and teachers to research ways to improve the dropout rate to meet AYP. This study used data from the study school within the study district. The dropout rate for this study is the percent of students who quit attending school during their freshman year. The student had to attend one full day of school to be considered a freshman. The study school had shown a steady increase in dropout rate since 2003, which ranged from 4.2% to 4.9% from 2003 to 2006.

The attendance rate also continued to fall short of the 95% that is required by AYP. The attendance rates were 94% and had plateaued. The students who maintained the low attendance rate correlated with the students who performed low academically and were at risk of dropping out of school. Thus, this study was important because providing freshmen with a transition program could have a direct positive effect on student attendance, dropout rate, the number of discipline referrals, and grades.

Many school districts have implemented a variety of programs designed to intervene with the freshman cycle of failure. Some programs are designed around a required class during the first semester of ninth grade (Mizelle, 2005). Others only give incoming students a half-day tour of the high school campus while still others are comprised of parent and student visitation with a modified schedule of classes to meet the teachers and administrators (Mizelle, 2005). Although rooted in good intentions, these types of programs fall short of the mark when it comes to integrating the new ninth grade students into the high school culture in a positive and supportive way.

The main program objectives for the study school were to increase student success as measured by increased attendance and increased grade point average and decreased dropout rate and decreased discipline referrals. The program would function the entire school year. Junior and Senior students called Eagle Leaders are invited to become members by their teachers. The potential leaders fill out an application, attend an overview of the program, and will receive a letter if they are accepted. Eagle Leaders attend two day training in August. During the training, Eagle Leaders are trained to work with the incoming freshman class and other new students.

Freshman students participated in a full day orientation program in August where the freshman students were paired with juniors and seniors who acted as positive role models for the incoming freshmen. The students participated in structured activities that addressed student self-esteem issues, time management skills, team building, and school spirit. The students continued to meet throughout the school year with their mentor during advisory time, school events, and activities designed only for freshmen.

Generalizations

Results of this study should be applied to schools and districts with demographics similar to the study school, a medium size high school. The school district is located in Franklin County, in Sullivan, Missouri. The district consists of one high school, one middle school, one elementary school, and one primary school with enrollment of approximately 2,100 students K-12.

Internal Validity - Limitations of the Study

"A study has internal validity when the observed differences of the dependent variable are directly related to the independent variable and not due to some other variable" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 178). Fraenkel and Wallen described ten possible threats to internal validity, and those threats, or limitations, were examined as part of this study.

Location. Location was a threat to this study. The school of study was the same for all freshmen; however the students used different classrooms throughout the study.

History. "One or more unanticipated and unplanned for events may occur during the course of a study that can affect the responses of subjects" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 184). The only history threats due to unusual events or experiences during 2003

through 2008 that could have affected the study were change in teaching staff and a hiring of new assistant principal. These changes could affect how instruction was delivered; create a change in culture, or a change in the implementation of the freshmen transition program.

Subject characteristic threat. The subject characteristic threat was a possibility in the study because age, maturity, gender, ethnicity, and intelligence could not be controlled. Also, other characteristics of the individuals such as behavior patterns or environmental influences cannot be controlled.

> The major threat to the internal validity of a causal-comparative study is the possibility of a subject characteristic threat. Because the researcher had no say in either the selection or formation of the comparison groups, there is always the likelihood that the groups are not equivalent on one or more important variables other than the identified group membership variable. (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 372)

Table 2 shows the break-down of this study's subjects, ninth grade students, by sub-groups for the 2003 to 2008 school years.

Table 2

Study School Freshmen Students from 2003 to 2008 by Sub-groups

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Black	0	0	0	0	1
Hispanic	2	4	2	4	3
White	206	164	229	195	164
IEP	31	16	26	31	35
Non IEP	177	152	205	168	133
Free/ Reduced lunch	51	48	65	63	73
Non Free/ Reduced lunch	157	120	166	136	95
Total	208	168	231	199	168

Note. The data in Table 2 are from the study district School Information System (2008).

Mortality. Loss of subjects was not a threat in this study. "In studies comparing groups, loss of subjects probably will not be a problem if the loss is about the same in all groups" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 179). There were no important differences in the number of subjects from 2003 through 2008.

Maturation. Maturation was not considered a threat in this study since the study focused on one grade level: freshmen. The study focused on the dropout rate, the number of discipline referrals, attendance rate, and the number of D's and F's a student received for their freshman year.

Attitude of Subject. The attitude of subjects during this study was considered a threat. Attitude of the subject is important when the subject is considering dropping out of school or is involved in a large number of discipline incidents.

Implementation. Implementation was a threat due to the fact that students had different teachers throughout their freshman year. Students have eight teachers a semester.

Other Possible Threats

Other limitations to this study included the following:

1. This study was limited to the number of students in the study district who attend the study school during 2003 through 2008.
2. This study was limited to the staff involvement in the implementation of a transition program. Only certain teachers were selected to attend the training for the program. The district trained four teachers out of 52. The trained teachers were responsible for updating and training the rest of the staff on the freshman transition program.
3. Grade Point Average (GPA) is calculated using the same method for all students in the district, but course selection for each student differed throughout the four years of high school.
4. The length of the study is considered a threat in this study because the study period gathered data over a five-year period.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms were defined to clarify the meaning of key words used in this study:

A Nation At Risk – "A report released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) in 1983. In response to evidence of lagging United States' student performance, the report recommended high-quality academic content standards, instruction, and standardized tests" (Wong & Nicotera, 2007, p. 237).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – "AYP is an individual state's measure of progress toward the goal of 100 percent of students achieving state academic standards in at least reading/communication arts and math. AYP sets the minimum level of proficiency that the state, the school districts, and schools must achieve each year on annual tests and related academic indicators" (United States Department of Education, 2005).

Attendance – A student's attendance day was based on a student attending school for 6.25 hours a day. The percent was based on the number of days that a student attended out of 174 school days.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) – The State of Missouri's Department of Education. DESE establishes the goals that Missouri's school districts must meet.

Discipline Referral - A formal written document received by administration due to inappropriate behavior of a student. The discipline action taken by an administrator may include student conference, parent conference, detention, in-school suspension, or out-of-school suspension.

Dropout Rate – The percent of students who quit attending school during their freshman year. The student had to attend one full day of school to be considered a freshman.

Free and Reduced Lunch – Families received free or reduced breakfast and lunch prices at school if the family's income falls within a certain range determined by the State Department of Education.

Grades – The letter value given to a student in class that represented his/her performance. In this study, the school used A, B, C, D, or F to determine the student's achievement level.

Grade Point Average (GPA) - Grades were based on a 4.0 scale. The following grading scale was used in this study: Table 3 shows a grade of *A* received a value of 4.0; a grade of *B* received a value of 3.0; a grade of *C* received a value of 2.0; and a grade of *D* received a value of 1.0. Each year long course is worth one credit.

Table 3

Study School's Grading Scale

96-100	A	4.00
93-95	A-	3.75
89-92	B+	3.50
86-88	B	3.25
83-85	B-	3.00
79-82	C+	2.75
75-78	C	2.50
70-74	C-	2.00
67-69	D+	1.75
64-66	D	1.50
60-63	D-	1.00
0-59	F	0.00

Note. The data in Table 3 are from the study schools Student Handbook (2008).

Individual Education Plan (IEP) ---"A plan developed by the student's parents and teachers that outlines the student's academic goals, methods to attain these goals, and particular education services the students will receive" (Wong & Nicotera, 2007, p. 241).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – "States must establish and implement an accountability plan with well-defined standards for academic proficiency, mandating teacher quality standards, enacting annual testing with disaggregated data, and use of scientifically based research instructional practices" (Wong & Nicotera, 2007, p. 8). "This bill was signed by President Bush in 2002 and is based on the idea that all children will be proficient in reading and math by 2014" (Wong & Nicotera, 2007, pp. 192-208).

Student Success – This study measured student success using data on increase in attendance and grade point average, decrease in number of discipline referrals and dropout rate among freshmen.

Transition – "A process during which institutional and social factors influence which students' educational careers are positively or negatively affected by movement between organizations" (Anafara & Schmid, 2007, p. 60). A program designed to help freshmen move from middle school to high school.

Summary

Today, administrators' primary focus is on being successful instructional leaders. Principals that engage in instructional leadership make a tremendous difference in student performance (Kohn & Nance, 2009). The impact that No Child Left Behind has had on improving student achievement has played an important part in this evolution. For educators to continue to help improve students' success, certain steps need to be taken. In 2006, Cushman stated that freshmen students offered the following suggestions for eighth grade students:

- Connect freshmen with junior and senior students.

- Support freshmen in developing skills and strategies for high school success.
- Help freshmen make strong and mutually respectful connections with adults.
- Provide bridge experiences in the summer after 8th grade year (p. 49).

The transition from middle school to high school is accompanied by both anticipation and anxiety (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). Transition received increased attention due to the fact that ninth grade course failures and high school dropout rates exceed all other grade levels (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001).

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not a freshman transition program had a statistically significant effect on freshmen success as measured by an increase in grades by lowering the number of D's and F's, an increase in attendance, a decrease in discipline referrals, and a decrease in dropout rate. The needs of students should always come first when schools are deciding how to improve. By implementing a freshman transition program, schools provide opportunities for students to not only graduate, but also to enjoy their high school experiences to the fullest.

Chapter II—Review of Literature

A major event in a young adolescent's life is transitioning to high school. Freshman students need support and collaboration from teachers, parents, counselors, and administrators (Herlihy, 2007). The March 2007 issue of *Principal Leadership* was devoted to easing student transitions. Topics included: connecting students and curriculum, involving parents and different programs for freshman such as freshman academies and moving students to alternative placements. This study investigated whether the implementation of a freshman transition program would show a statistically significant impact on students' grades, attendance, number of discipline referrals and grade point average. A successful transition program can create a strong bridge between eighth and ninth grade (Herlihy, 2007). The researcher used the review of literature to examine transition programs. The literature focused on effective transition programs and parents' and student's perception of the transition to high school.

An article written by P. S. George, even though over ten years old, still seems relevant. The article showed the importance of focusing on freshman achievement in 1999. The following passage in the article stated

> 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. (George, 1999, p. 2)

Entering ninth grade may be one of the most academically challenging times in a young person's life (Roskosky, 2006). The students usually deal with self-esteem issues, developmental changes, and the fear of changing schools. The students, not yet adults, are getting ready to face additional changes in their lives (Roskosky, 2006). "For most high school students, cognitive advancements such as abstract thinking become increasingly generalized and consolidated. Students whose cognitive skills do not develop as quickly as the norm may become frustrated as academic demands increase" (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006, p. 16). In addition, the transitioning middle school students, who were once at the top of the middle school structure, will now find themselves at the bottom of the high school structure (Roskosky, 2006).

Since the implementation of The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in January 2002, school districts must provide measurable academic achievement for student success. NCLB required states to develop assessments at certain grade levels (McLeod, D'Amicao, & Protheroe 2003). School districts then examined adequate yearly progress (AYP) to see if the district had achieved goals set by NCLB (United States Department of Education, 2008). Under No Child Left Behind, each state has developed and implemented measurements for determining whether its schools and local educational agencies (LEA's) are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) (United States Department of Education, 2008). School districts that fail to meet AYP are placed on a state-initiated

school improvement plan (MODESE, 2008). AYP mandated school districts to show progress toward the criteria, but the consequences of failure are determined by each state.

In an article "How Tracking Creates a Poverty of Learning", the author states little evidence that NCLB was improving student academic achievement (Futrell & Gomez, 2008). It is highly unlikely that students placed in these subgroups have access to a curriculum that is sufficiently rich and rigorous to enhance their chances on state assessments (Futrell & Gomez, 2008). By the year 2013-2014, school districts are expected to have all students achieving at the proficient level of academic achievement set by NCLB (Principal's Guide to No Child Left Behind, 2003).

To meet the needs of NCLB, principals must look at ways to improve student success. Research has shown that students entering high school often struggle (Chapman & Sawyer, 2001). Students who have a difficult time transitioning to high school will often experience a decline in attendance and a decline in grades. This can lead to an increase in students dropping out of school (Chapman & Sawyer, 2001). "As researchers look at understanding why students are dropping out of school, there is a concern over whether the programs that schools have developed to get students into high school are effective" (Smith, 2007, p. 74).

Differences Between Middle School and High School

Building and district administrators are concerned about the transition to high school; therefore, the following question is necessary: What are the major differences between middle school and high school? Dr. Mike Hall (2008), in his presentation on *High School Redesign: Making the Transition from Middle School to High School,*

discussed size, scheduling, classroom expectations, academic competition, mixed grade-level classrooms, discipline, and parent involvement in school.

High schools are generally larger than middle schools. Students have a longer distance to travel between classrooms. Along with moving from different areas of the building, the freshmen have to move among upperclassmen. Maute and Brough (2002) suggested as part of the transition process, to lengthen the passing time between classes for the first couple days of school. This allows students to become familiar with the building and the best route to take to classes. Freshmen are also concerned with opening lockers and eating lunch (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006). Students need assistance with opening lockers so they can transition successfully between classes. Lunchroom procedures are also new to students. Schools need to ensure effective use of a transition program to addresses all of the issues.

Class schedules are different at the high school level. Students are assigned a class schedule and move to the classes as individuals rather than groups (Hall, 2008). Furthermore, students will have more teachers. On a traditional schedule a student can experience six or seven different teachers and on a 4X4 block the student can have eight teachers. Lampert (2005) suggested high schools develop a freshmen advisory program that specifically discusses classes with students along with study skills, time management and stress management for students.

Classroom expectations at the high school level may be different than the middle school level for students. Students must adapt to a variety of instructional styles and conform to a different system of rules and expectations. “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).

Along with classroom expectations, academic competition becomes important to students. Students experience a different, usually higher, grading standard. The environment becomes more and more competitive as students move through high school (Herlihy, 2007). Students compete for class ranking that greatly impacts their post-secondary opportunities. Educators need to keep a clear focus on student success. Smith (2007) suggested that teachers host report card conferences with students with a continuous focus on academics, behavior, and attendance. Students who experience difficulty transitioning and struggle academically can experience a negative outcome. Roderick and Camburn (1999) reported students making the transition to ninth grade are at a risk of early course failure. Of the ninth grade students Roderick and Camburn studied, course failure immediately following the transition to high school was not limited to those students with documented low prior academic skills, making the threat of course failure an issue for entering ninth graders of all achievement levels.

"Young adolescence marks the downward spiral in motivation and school-related behaviors. This downward spiral often leads to academic failure and dropping out of school" (Anfara & Schmid, 2007, p. 62). As students enter high school, the discipline code utilizes more serious punishments that are strictly enforced. In Anfara and Schmid (2007) research cited Graber & Brooks-Gunn (1996) found that freshman transitioning into high schools experienced an increased behavioral problem. The behavior problems usually resulted in out of school suspension or in school suspensions. The report found that discipline increased in the beginning of a student's freshman year.

Parents tend to become less involved in their child's education because there is a gap between what the parents want to do and what they know how to do (Hall, 2008). Mizelle and Irvin (2000) stated that a parent's involvement in their child's education is very important to their success. A transition program needs to involve parents in the process and provide a series of activities for them.

Purpose of a Transition Program

"Elementary school is very similar to middle school; high school is very similar to the first year in college; but the last year in middle school is nothing like the first year in high school" (Hertzog, 2006, p. 60). Elementary school and middle school are very similar in the aspect that teaming is still used with students. Teachers tend to focus on students' social, emotional, and behavior needs. However, high school teachers' lack attention towards students' social, emotional, and behavior needs. High school teachers' schedules differ where the teacher may have freshman one hour and juniors the next hour (Hertzog, 2006). Teacher's expectations may remain the same for both classes; juniors or freshmen. High school and college can be similar in the fact that students earn credits at both levels to be able to move forward. A transition program needs to be put in place to help students be successful in high school.

> Schools today are different than ever before in history, as are students, families, and our communities. The transition from middle school to high school is one of the most difficult situations young people face; expectations are greater, school are larger, and individual attention from teacher and school staff is often diminished. Research has shown that if a student makes it successfully through

> his or her first year of high school, he or she will have 'made it', and he or she can be expected to graduate. (Jacobson, 2008, p. 2)

A transition program should be designed to help students be successful in school. One purpose of a transition program is to keep students from dropping out of high school. Academic failure in the ninth grade is a high predictor of dropout rates in school districts. "Each year, 1.2 students fail to graduate from high school" (Pinkus, 2006, p. 1). In the State of Missouri, the dropout rate continues to climb. Table 4 shows the dropout rate from 2004 through 2008 for Missouri.

Table 4

Dropout rate---State of Missouri from 2004 through 2008

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number of Students dropping out	8,872	9,737	11,069	10,525	12,034
Percent	3.3	3.6	4	3.7	4.2

From Missouri Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (2008).

A student's freshman year is when the student starts earning credits that lead to graduation (Hertzog, 2006). Students who failed a class and did not earn credit in their freshman year were usually at risk to not graduate (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006). Hertzog and Morgan (1999) performed a study of fifty-six Georgia and Florida high schools. The study found that schools with extensive transition programs had significantly lower failure and dropout rates than those schools that did not offer a transition program for freshman.

Another study by Sparks, Johnson, and Akos (2010) found six percent of freshman dropped out in ninth grade. The research found students that failed freshman

English, failed Algebra, and retained in any grade from kindergarten through ninth grade were endanger of dropping out of high school (Sparks, Johnson, & Akos, 2010). The researchers stated that an important intervention to have in place for the students is a transition program. The transition program could help lower the dropout rate for school districts.

During a student's middle school years, the largest percent of courses are not offered for credit. The student will earn a grade for a class but can still be promoted if the student fails one or more subjects. When students enter high school, the student has to receive a letter grade of a D- to receive credit in the class. The student will not graduate until they receive the number of credits required by the school district.

Traditionally, students receive a brief overview of high school procedures. Students visiting high schools or counselors talking to middle school students a few times a year are not enough to reduce the failure rate in schools. Administrators and counselors need to address student concerns early in the student's eighth grade year. The ratio of counselors to students makes it difficult for counselors to form a relationship with students and to help them make the transition to high school. Missouri's Department of Education sets the desirable standard for counselors. The ratio is 301 to 375 students to one counselor (MODESE, 2008).

Another purpose of a transition program was to create a warm and safe social environment for students (Anafara & Schmid, 2007). Many students develop a more negative view of themselves than they had in middle school; they feel less competent to handle the academic and social demands of high school (Mizelle, 2005). Students need to feel a sense of belonging during times of transition (Anafara & Schmid, 2007). Anafara

and Schmid also link school connectedness to academic achievement, social and personal attitudes, and participation in school. Students are also less likely to drop out and be involved in delinquent behavior when they feel a sense of belonging (2007).

McAdoo reported in her article "Studies in transition: How to help adolescents navigate the path to and from middle school" a program by Lena Morgan, designed a model transition program for students entering high school. The transition program addressed areas involving counselors, parents, and students.

The first point addressed counselors and teachers who visited middle schools. They would meet with eighth grade students about the high school's curriculum, class schedule, course offerings and homework policies. A freshmen orientation meeting for parents of eighth graders was also critical. Parents were able to ask questions regarding curriculum, class schedule, course offerings, and homework policy and speak with the principal, assistant principals, and counselors. Eighth grade students were able to take a tour of the high school so the high school staff can explain academic, sports, and extracurricular options. The researcher of this study examined the above suggestions when designing the study school's transition program.

As part of professional development, it was important for eighth grade teachers to visit the high schools so they can understand the expectations their colleagues have for ninth graders (McADoo, 1999). Professional development programs for high school teachers to help them understand the developmental needs of young adolescents are also an important part of planning a successful program.

Effective Transition Programs

In developing an effective transition program, it was essential for principals to acknowledge that, given the emphasis placed on student success, no permanent template can be developed (Hertzog, 2006). "By the time students enter the eighth grade, the transition to ninth grade looms large. Middle school teachers are talking more urgently about the need to prepare for high school" (Cushman, 2006, p. 47). 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). As instructional leaders looked at ways to improve student success in schools, they used their greatest resource: students themselves. Juniors and seniors know how it feels to walk into a new school, meet new students, and get involved.

Educators may ask, What does an effective transition program look like? Successful transition programs must involve collaboration between eighth and ninth grade buildings and personnel (Mizelle, 1999). The study school had a collaboration piece in place for the freshman transition program implementation. Middle school and high school counselors worked together to ensure a smooth transition. Activities that administrators, counselors, and teachers need to learn together were about high school curriculum, courses, requirements for graduation, and extra-curricular activities (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). Transition programs must consistently ask students to reflect on freshman experiences, including social, academic, and emotional (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000).

Also, programs designed to reduce high school dropout rates must address the challenges associated with the transition to high school and provide targeted early

intervention in order to promote academic recovery in failing students (Roderick & Camburn, 1999). Successful transition programs address the information gap by providing students and families with a wealth of information about the academic, social, and organizational similarities and differences between middle school and high school (Mizelle, 1999).

High school dropout rates are significantly lower in school districts that have explicit middle school to high school transition programs (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001). Effective programs address curriculum, facilities, safety, and discipline, and provide accurate information (Smith, 2006).

The literature outlines several examples of effective transition programs that were effective. One program that school districts have implemented was called Link Crew. (Link Crew originally was called the Boomerang Project). Link Crew is a program where school districts can send teachers to be trained in successful transition activities for students. The school of study sent three teachers and two administrators to the training. Sixteen hundred school districts in the United States have participated in the Link Crew program.

> Link Crew promotes positive growth in student attitudes, behaviors and beliefs by facilitating a support network. The network teams seniors and juniors with incoming ninth grade students for the purpose of empowering the newcomers with ownership of their new environment. Link Crew also instills in the older students a sense of responsibility for the success of their younger peers. This relationship forms a powerful foundation for positive and comprehensive climate change. (Jacobson, 2008, ¶1)

The objectives Link Crew promotes include the following:

- Empowering juniors and seniors as role models for freshmen.
- Increasing academic success through support and peers.
- Developing leadership skills in students on campus.
- Allowing successful older students to pass on positive traditions to younger students.
- Exposing students to a variety of individuals at school in positive situations.
- Teaching students that by working together they can be successful and enjoy one another.
- Helping create a supportive and positive atmosphere on campus. (Jacobson, 2008, ¶ 5)

A survey conducted by the Boomerang Project showed the following ranked priorities for effective transition programs

1. Provide social emotional support to Freshmen (47% rank 1, 26% rank 2)
2. Change your school's culture around how students treat each other (35% rank 1, 26% rank 2)
3. Provide academic success (11% rank 1, 18% 2, 20% rank 3)
4. Increase unity (10.5% rank 1, 16% rank 2, 24% rank 3)
5. Provide additional leadership for 11th and 12th (41.5% rank 5)

What has been the greatest difference Link Crew has made on your campus?

1. 70.5%: Improved school culture and climate
2. 10.6%: Other

3. 9.2%: Lower discipline with freshmen
4. 6.8%: Improved academic success
5. 2.6%: Improved attendance

Link Crew also sponsored the following activities: training and orientation, First Week Check-in to freshmen, academic follow-ups, finals prep/study sessions, movie night, seminars/advisors, Link Crew class, and Link Alerts/Link Applause. (Jacobson, 2009, Survey)

Jacobson (2009) described Link Crew class as a freshmen advisory program. The Link Alerts are handed out to freshmen that are struggling academically and Link Applause are for students that are accomplishing academic and social goals.

Another program was a school-within-a-school; also called a learning community or freshman center. The model helps downsize the number of students to a manageable student population for teachers and administrators (McIntosh & White, 2006). Many districts have several middle schools that feed into one high school. This creates larger number of freshmen in high school than the students would experience as freshmen. McIntosh and White (2006) stated, "The positives of a learning community are the improvements in attendance, student's achievement, behavior, attainment, teacher morale, and parental contact" (p. 40). Small freshmen academies allow freshmen to study together within the same group of teachers. The freshmen for the most part remain separated from sophomores, juniors, and seniors. This type of freshman center has been established at Findlay School District in Ohio. Approximately 500 freshmen became part of the wing. The components of the Findlay program included:

- Principal, counselor, core teachers, and lockers located within the freshmen only wing.
- Core teams of teachers sharing the same group of students.
- Freshman counselor working with middle school counselors to ensure proper placement of students into freshmen courses.
- Freshmen-only lunch with lunchtime activities.
- A 3-hour freshman orientation in August. (McIntosh & White, 2006)

The attendance rate for Findlay High School was 94.19% at the beginning of the program and improved to 95.5% in 2007 (McIntosh and White, 2006). The number of students expelled decreased from 20 students in 2003 to 3 students in 2007 (McIntosh and White, 2006). The program was implemented in 2004. (The class of 2003 was not part of the freshman program.)

Muhlenberg South High School in Kentucky implemented a freshmen wing that addressed creative scheduling and increased communications between parents, students, and teachers (Clark & Hunley, 2007). Clark and Hunley (2007) reported the faculty at Muhlenberg noticed freshmen becoming discontented with high school, leading to increased absenteeism, increased discipline programs, decline in grades, and an overall negative attitude towards school. The teachers used a middle school approach to teach students. The core classes operated on a flex schedule. For example, if the science teacher is completing a lab, students may meet for ninety minutes for science and the rest of the classes be shortened for the day. The program has been in place for six years and continues to see success.

The next transition program designed by Kathleen Cushman (2006) addresses four points. The first point discussed was connecting the freshmen with high school students. The next point involved supporting freshmen in developing skills and strategies for high school success. The third point dealt with helping to make strong and mutually respectful connections with adults. The last point provided experiences in the summer after the eighth grade year (p. 49).

To achieve the four points Cushman (2006) stated that the following items needed to take place in school districts:

School districts need to create smaller learning communities for freshmen. This is similar to freshmen academies or freshmen wings. "New high school students are more likely to find their academic and social bearings in a smaller learning community" (Cushman, 2006, p. 51). Cushman (2006) says that administrators need to group ninth grade students together in one physical setting. When freshmen are located within the same area of the building, students find it easier to transition from classroom, to lockers, back to the classrooms.

Start out the school year with a ninth grade orientation period. This is a consisted suggestion by all researchers. "Coming into an unfamiliar high school, first year students appreciate extra time to sort out their schedules, find their way around, get to know teachers and fellow students, and ask questions without fearing ridicule" (Cushman, 2006, p. 51).

Match students up with mentors. Cushman stated "some high schools have a buddy system that pairs new ninth graders with tenth or eleventh graders. Mentors go through a training period, and then check in with their ninth grade buddies regularly all

year" (2006, p. 51). This concept aligns with the Link Crew concept created by Micah Jacobson.

A students schedule needs to incorporate an advisory class. This allows for students to belong to a group of about 15-students who meet with a teacher to help with the transition into high school (Cushman, 2006). The advisory activities that teachers design needs to connect with students personally and academically. Establish fair classroom norms and enforce them consistently. Cushman stated, "Ninth graders have the early adolescent's need for order and structure in the classroom, but they also have the older teenager's passion for fairness and justice" (2006, p. 52).

Cushman (2006) summarized her findings by stating that educators should "listen to and act on students' concerns about high school transition, teachers can help students navigate their way through the ambivalence of the early teen years and step up to the plate every day with renewed interest and excitement" (p. 52). The study school informally talked with students about their concerns before implementing the transition program.

Middle schools use the teamwork concept when designing curriculum. The same concept may be used at the freshman level. Kowal stated that vertical teaming was also a successful way for educators to help students be successful in transitions. "A vertical team is a group of educators (teachers, counselors, administrators from different grade levels) who work together to develop a curriculum that provides a seamless transition from grade to grade" (Kowal, 2002, p. 1). Aligning curriculum from grade level to grade level provides for a smoother transition for students to high school. Educators can

provide a scope and sequence middle school teachers and high school teachers so the curriculum is seamless across grade levels.

The study school has implemented this concept K-12. This allows for meaningful conversations between teachers of each grade level.

> Through vertical teaming, school districts can strengthen the opportunities for all students to have access to--and be successful in--rigorous course work. While vertical teaming does help provide a coherent K-12 curriculum, the vertical team approach is also a valuable way to help students navigate the transitions between elementary, middle, and high school from an academic standpoint. (Kowal, 2002, p. 1)

The key points of vertical teaming are to meet the needs of students by building collaboration, cooperation, and communications with educators (Kowal, 2002). Teachers can collaborate K-12 in content areas, assessment, homework, or support for special needs students (Kowal, 2002). The opportunities are endless. Administrators should provide in-service time to promote vertical teaming and encourage teachers to work in groups to promote dialogue across levels of education (Kowal, 2002).

An effective transition program begins with student success in middle school. Cushman's (2006), Jacobson's (2008), Kowal (2002), and White's (2006) programs identified student success. The programs aimed at improving student attendance, achievement, and dropout rate. School administrators need to identify problem areas in their school districts and design a transition program that meets their freshmen needs.

One can look at several key indicators to determine if a transition program is successful, based on the research.

- Decreased absentee rates
- Steady or increased grade point average (GPA)
- Steady or increased participation in co-curricular activities
- Decreased truancy
- Fewer discipline incidents
- Positive mental health
- Goal-oriented students
- Involved parents

Students' and Parents' Perception of the Transition to High School

"The transitions from an elementary school to a middle level school to a high school are major stepping-stones in the lives of young adolescents and their parents" (Kinney, 2006, p. 29). Transitions are critical periods in the development of the adolescent. There is more to the transition process than academic success. Transition programs need to be designed to include parent involvement. "When parents are involved in the transition process, they tend to stay involved with their children throughout high school" (Mizelle, 2005, p. 58). Parent involvement leads to higher grades, improved test scores, better attendance, more positive attitudes and behaviors and higher graduation rates (Mizelle, 2005). Unfortunately, parent involvement typically drops significantly by eighth grade and may drop even more during students' transitions from middle school to high school unless schools and teachers work to keep parents involved (Mizelle, 2005).

Students and parents have different perceptions of what to expect as they enter high school. “Students look forward to making new friends, gaining independence, and attending school events. Parents were looking forward to their child forming new friendships and having increased opportunities for extra-curricular activities” (Smith et al, 2006, p. 2). Parents need to have an understanding of high school expectations and procedures that are involved in a typical student day (Mizzele & Irvin, 2000). The author stated,

> The top three concerns for students included the amount of homework, an increase in academic difficulty, and getting lost. In addition to being worried about the amount of homework, the majority of parents reported being concerned that their children would feel pressure to do well in school and would experience negative peer pressure. (Smith et al., 2006, p. 2)

Parental involvement in the transition process contributes to and impacts ninth grade achievement (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Therefore, parents should be a part of the transition process. Cauley and Jovanovich (2006) suggested several transition activities for parents. The activities include the following:

- Invite parents to meet with administrators and counselors during the spring in a small group setting.
- Provide open house for parents and students so they can ask questions, tour the building, visit classrooms, and meet teachers.
- Provide parents with handbooks.
- Support parents as they help their students adjust to the new level. (p. 22)

Summary

The transition from middle school to high school can be a very stressful time for students and parents (Clark & Hunley, 2007). This review of literature found that transitioning students is very important. “The middle level has been characterized as a bridge between elementary and secondary school---a place where students travel the metamorphosis from childhood to adolescence” (Maute & Brough, 2002, p. 19). This literature review looked at the purpose of an effective transition program, strengths of effective transitions programs, and parent and student perceptions.

Involving families and students in the process as early as possible, helps make the transition easier. 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 (Constantino, 2007).

“Although most students welcome moving to high school, many are anxious about how they’ll fare in the larger, more impersonal, more competitive, and grade-oriented environment” (Haviland, 2005, p. 29). Link Crew increases freshman success; more and more studies are showing that if students have a positive experience their first year in high school, their chances for success rise exponentially. The Link Crew high school transition program provides the structure for freshmen to receive support and guidance from juniors and seniors who have been through the challenges that high school poses, and understand that the transition to a larger school can sometimes be overwhelming (Jacobson, 2008).

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)

The review of literature showed that there is a need for freshman transition programs. This study will analyze a freshman transition program implemented at the school of study located in the central Missouri. The researcher reviewed grades, attendance, discipline, and dropout rate. It was important to determine how the freshman transition program impacted student attendance, grades by lowering the number of D's and F's, discipline, and dropout rate to increase student success and keep students in school. Chapter 3 will explain the methodology that was used during the study.

Chapter III—Methodology

Overview

The school of study established as building goals the following four strategic initiatives in the fall 2005: (a) increase student attendance and grade point average, (b) decrease dropout rate and student disciplines,(c) create a positive school climate, and (d) expand leadership roles and opportunities for students. These building goals were the center of focus in the school's efforts to increase student success. To meet these goals, as well as meet the accountability standards of NCLB and Missouri Assessment Program (MAP), the study school choose to implement a freshman transition program. In the spring of 2006, the leadership team attended a freshman transition conference in Chicago, Illinois, to learn how to implement a successful program.

In May of 2006, the study school implemented the freshman transition program. Student Eagle Leaders were selected and the freshman class attended a full day orientation in August (see Appendix B and C).The transition program focused on the four building goals, which is designed to help the district meet AYP and MAP indicators. The leadership teams goal of improving attendance, lowering the number of D's and F's, lowering the number of discipline referrals, and decreasing the dropout rate would ultimately improve student success and MAP scores for district.

As part of NCLB, all Missouri public schools participate in MAP, which test students in the area of Communication Arts and Math. The State of Missouri currently is not meeting standards in Communication Arts and Math as measured by Adequate Yearly

Progress (MODESE, 2008). Figure 1 identifies 2008 Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Math data for the Four Rivers Conference schools that surround the school of study. The chart shows that schools were not meeting AYP requirements or that the district will not be meeting the requirements by 2014. Most districts will struggle to meet AYP for 2009 which is set at 54.1% for the mathematics content area. This means districts must have 54.1% of students attaining proficient or above on the state assessment to meet AYP.

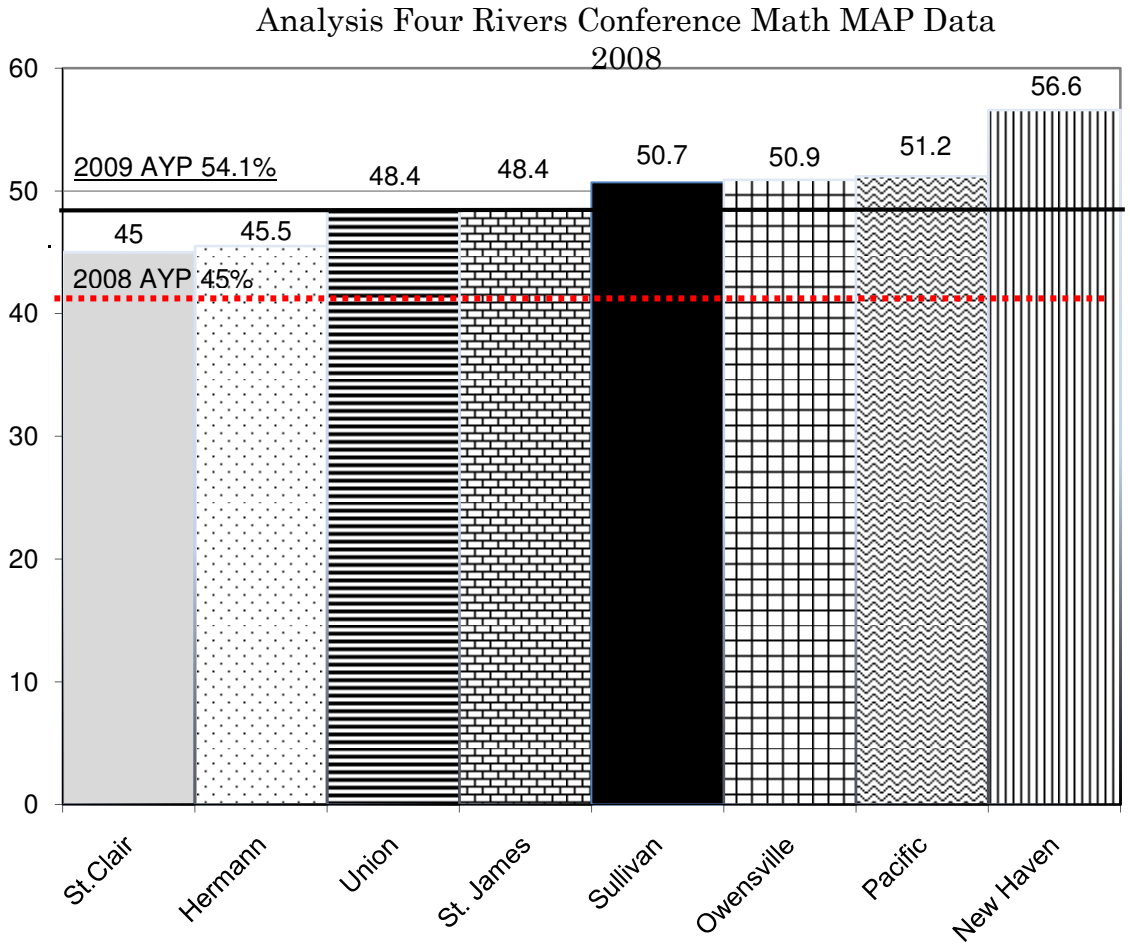


Figure 1. 2008 AYP analysis of MAP math data for Four Rivers Conference schools

Figure 2 identifies 2008 MAP Communication Arts data for the Four Rivers Conference schools that surround the school of study. The chart shows that schools were not meeting

AYP requirements or that the districts will not be meeting the requirements by 2014. Most districts will struggle to meet AYP for 2009 which is set at 59.2% for the Communication Arts content area. This means districts must have 59.2% of students attaining proficient or above to meet AYP.

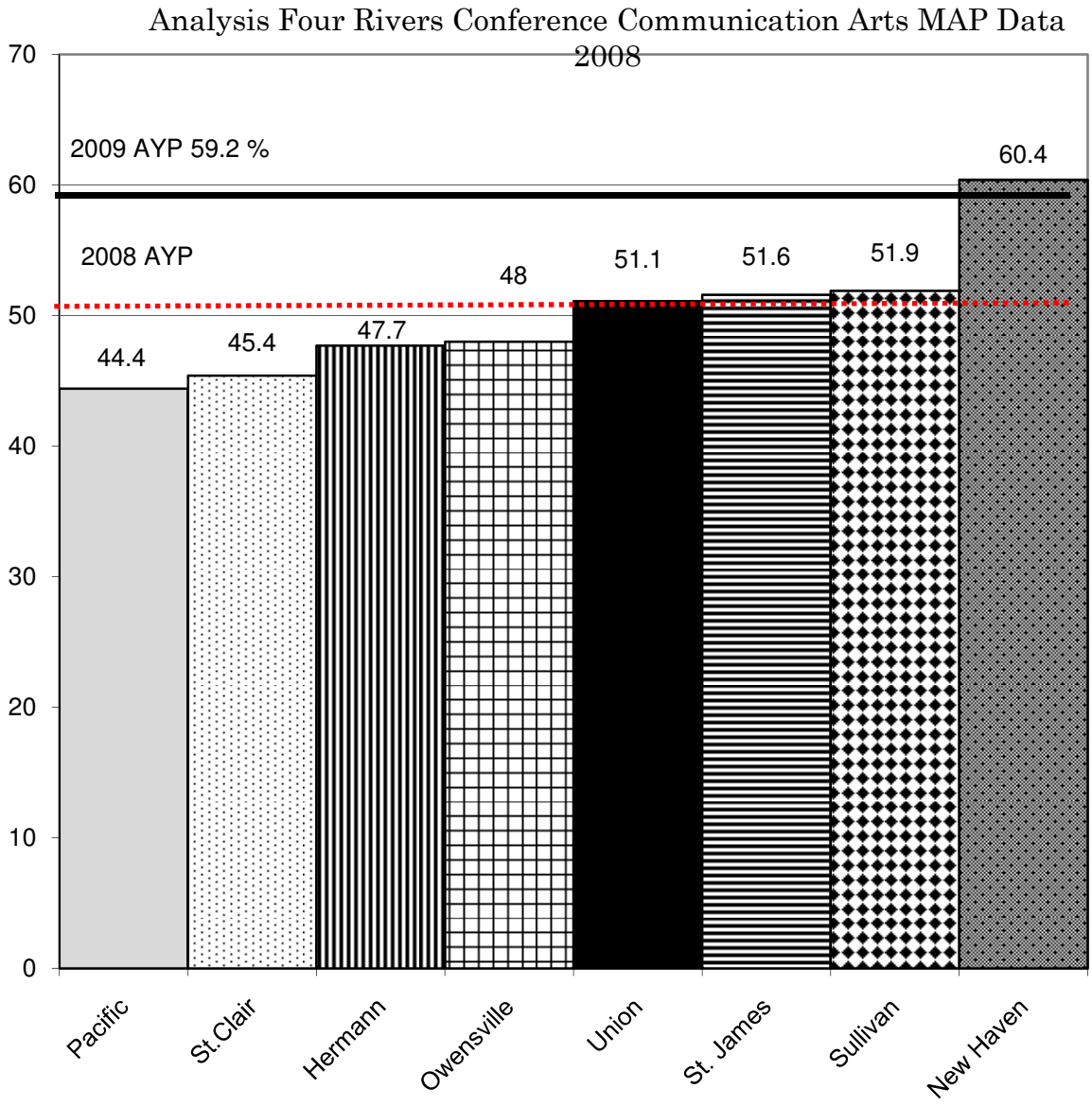


Figure 2. 2008 AYP analysis of MAP Communication Arts data for the Four Rivers Conference schools

While this study did not reflect data from the surrounding school districts, the MAP data in Figure 1 and 2 show how the school districts are performing. This information is important to this study because the data reveals a trend that most school districts are not performing to NCLB standards. Attendance, dropout, number of discipline referrals, and D's and F's were not retrieved from the surrounding schools because the schools did not implement a freshman transition program.

Moving from middle to high school can be very exciting for students (Hertzog, 2006). However, many students who are transitioning from middle school to high school struggle academically. "Transition is receiving increased attention due to the fact that ninth grade course failures and high school dropout rates exceed all other grade levels" (Smith, 2006, p. 1). This study examined the transition program at the school of study. The study school initiated the transition program for incoming freshmen in the 2006-07 school year.

Research Questions

"A research question should define a problem that can be anything that a person finds unsatisfactory, a state of affairs that needs to be changed, or anything that is not working as well as it should be" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 28).

The purpose of this study was to determine if the implementation of a freshman transition program would make a difference in student achievement regarding grades, the number of discipline referrals, attendance rate, and dropout rate. This study asked two research questions:

- Will implementation of a transition program result in increased grades by lowering the number of D's and F's, and increased attendance rate?

- Will implementation of a transition program result in decreased dropout rate and decrease in the number of discipline referrals?

Purpose of the Study

The study determined if the implementation of a freshman transition program would make a difference in student success. The data obtained included students' grades, the number of discipline referrals, attendance rate, and dropout rate. Data were obtained and quantitatively compared to determine if implementing a freshman transition program made a difference in freshmen success.

Description of the Sample

Sampling refers to the process of selecting individuals to participate in a study or refers to any group of which information was obtained. A sample is a definitive group chosen as representation of a much larger population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). The population of this study consisted of students enrolled at the school of study. The school of study serves approximately 750 students in grades 9-12. The study focused on the freshman class of which ninety-eight percent were white. The time span was from 2003 to 2008. The high school implemented a freshman transition program in 2006-2007. No particular students were identified in the study. Data for this study included all freshman students and did not disaggregate based on ethnicity or gender.

Freshmen semester grades, discipline, attendance, and dropout data were collected from the study site School Information System (SIS). The researcher used a random sample of 40 students from each year (see Appendix A). Each student's identification was matched to grades, discipline, and attendance. This process completed a data set for each candidate to be entered into the population that would provide the random sample

for the study. A random number generator was used to obtain 40 randomly selected values. All student records were kept confidential and were used only to make a comparison.

"The success of a causal-comparative study depends on a large degree in how carefully the comparison groups are defined. It is important to select groups that are homogeneous with regard to at least some important variables" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 371). The freshman classes in this study from 2003 through the 2008 school years are identified in Table 2, which showed that the freshman classes were homogeneous with regard to the variables of gender, race, IEP or non-IEP, and Free and Reduced lunch eligibility.

Table 2

Study School Freshmen Students from 2003 to 2008 by Sub-groups

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Black	0	0	0	0	1
Hispanic	2	4	2	4	3
White	206	164	229	195	164
IEP	31	16	26	31	35
Non IEP	177	152	205	168	133
Free/ Reduced lunch	51	48	65	63	73
Non Free/ Reduced lunch	157	120	166	136	95
Total	208	168	231	199	168

Note. The data in Table 2 are from the study district School Information System (2008).

Research Design

This study can be categorized as a quantitative research project to study the effect of a freshman transition program on student success. The researcher reviewed data on attendance, grades through lowering the number of D's and F's, a decrease in the number discipline referrals, and a decrease in dropout rate. The subjects for this project were freshman students who were enrolled at the study school.

Quantitative data are obtained when the variable being studied is measured along a scale that indicates how much of the variable is present. Quantitative data are

reported in terms of scores. Higher scores indicate that more of the variable is present than do lower scores. (Franken & Wallen, 2003, p. 200)

Quantitative research, according to Johnson (2005), requires the researcher to understand each of the following:

1. The independent variable is the treatment or factor that the researcher manipulates.
2. The dependent variable is the particular result or the effect of the treatment.
3. The treatment group is the group of subjects.
4. The control group is a group as similar as possible to the treatment group.
5. The research question is that for which the researcher seeks to find an answer (p. 5).

This quantitative research project was causal-comparative. Franken and Wallen (2003) defined causal-comparative research as the "investigators attempt to determine the cause or consequences of differences that already exist between or among groups of individuals" (p. 368).

The focii of the study was freshman successes after a freshman transition program was implemented in one high school. The difference in student population, administrator, and teacher turnover within the collection period may have been variables affecting the quantitative data collected for this study.

In this study, the independent variable was the implementation of a freshman transition program. The dependent variables were students' grades measured by counting the number of D's and F's, the number of discipline referrals, attendance rate, and dropout rate. The treatment group was comprised of students in ninth grade. The control

group was the previous freshman classes before the transition program as implemented. In causal-comparative studies, the treatment groups are frequently referred to as comparison groups (Franken & Wallen, 2003).

These quantitative data were collected during a five year span, from the 2003 school year through the 2008 school year. At the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, a freshman transition program was implemented by the school district of study. During the previous school years, the district did not have a transition program in place. Students' grades were examined to determine the number of students who received D's and F's on their report card. All D's and F's were counted on a student's report card. For example if a student received one D and two F's, the researcher would count a total of three D's and F's for the student. Discipline records were examined to determine the number of office referrals received by freshmen. Attendance records were examined to determine the attendance rate for freshmen. The final piece of data that was examined was the dropout rate for the freshman class. The comparisons were made using data only from the study school.

Student Success

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used student grades, attendance rate, number of discipline referrals, and dropout rate as indicators of student success. The researcher identified the number of D's and F's the students received at the end of the semester. The attendance rate was determined by examining the average daily attendance (A.D.A.) at the end of the school year. The value was identified by a percentage.

Description of the Population

The population of this study consisted of students enrolled in the study school, located in central Missouri over a five year period, from 2003 to 2008. The data were obtained from the freshman class. Factors such as student population, faculty, and student socio-economic status were reflective of the general population at the study school. All records examined consisted of the entire freshman class over the five-year period in which they were obtained.

Data Analysis Procedures

The causal-comparative design involves two groups of students that differ on a particular variable of interest and comparing them on another variable (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). The differences between the two groups related in this study were students who participated in a transition program and students who did not participate in a transition program. The variables being compared were attendance rate, dropout rate, the number of discipline referrals, and student grades from pre- and post- implementation of the transition program. Figure 3 represents the causal-comparative design for this study. The letter *C* represents the presence of the characteristic. The dashed line was used to show the intact groups being compared (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

Group	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
I	C1 Pre-transition student's	O Attendance, dropout rate, discipline referrals, and grades
II	C2 Post-transition student's	O Attendance, dropout rate discipline referrals, and grades

Figure 3. Causal-Comparative Design

Note. From *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (p. 372), by J. R. Fraenkel, and N.E. Wallen (2003), St. Louis, MO: McGraw-Hill Companies.

Quantitative data were collected from the study school's School Information System (SIS) over a five-year span from 2003 through the 2008 school year. This was a causal-comparative study to determine if a freshman transition program would improve student success in regards to lowering the number of D's and F's, number of discipline referrals, attendance, and dropout rate, and to help determine if structural changes are necessary in the future implementation of the freshman transition program.

Freshman students' grades, number of discipline referrals, attendance, and dropout rate were collected. These records were used to make a comparison to determine if implementing a freshmen transition program had a positive effect on student achievement. The baseline data for the study were gathered from the 2003 school year.

The inferential statistical analyses utilized in this study were the *z*-test. "The *z*-test is a parametric statistical test used to see how far a raw score is from the mean in standard

deviation units." (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 210). This test was chosen because the researcher compared the mean of grades, attendance rate, dropout rate, and the number of discipline referrals from the pre- and post- implementation years. The researcher wanted to see if there was a significant difference after program implementation. The z-test was used due to the use of a sample size of 30 or greater.

The overall purpose of this study was to determine if there were significant increases in freshmen success after the implementation of a freshmen transition program. "It is customary in educational research to view as unlikely any outcome that has a probability of .05 (p = .05) or less. This is referred to as the .05 level of significance" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) p. 236). This level of significance establishes the probability of obtaining the same outcome occurring 5 times (or less) in 100 (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003). The .05 level of significance was used for this study.

Hypotheses

To determine the effect of a freshman transition program on student success, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis #1. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in attendance will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Hypothesis #2. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in grades will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Hypothesis #3. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of discipline referrals will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Hypothesis #4. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of dropouts will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

The following null hypothesis was proposed:

Null hypothesis #1. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in attendance will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Null hypothesis #2. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in grades will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Null hypothesis #3. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of discipline referrals will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Null hypothesis #4. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of dropouts will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Summary

This study analyzed the impact of implementing a transition program at the study school for freshmen. For the purpose of this study, administrators, counselors, and teachers analyzed data on dropout rate, grades, the number of discipline referrals, and attendance rate. The information was obtained from study schools' School Information System (SIS) from 2003 through 2008. The 2006-2007 school year was the first year the freshman transition program was implemented.

The purpose of this study was to implement and evaluate a transition program assisting students moving from eighth grade to the ninth grade. With the proper resources and support, the impact of a freshman transition program goes beyond a student's freshman year in high school. Positive growth in students' grades and behaviors may be part of the outcome.

The transition program at the high school level creates successful social, academic, and education or career planning experiences for students, but only if the program is successful. A freshman transition program provides students with an awareness that people care about them. Students who have positive experiences their first year in high school are more likely to experience success. The results of this study will be beneficial to faculty and administrators to determine if the freshman transition program was successful.

Discussion of this study continues in Chapter 4 with an analysis of data and its statistical treatment.

Chapter IV—Results

The purpose of this study was to determine if the implementation of a freshman transition program would make a difference in student success regarding grades, discipline, attendance, and dropout rate. The data were reviewed for a five year time span from 2003 through 2008. Prior to the 2006-2007 school year, the school of study did not have a transition program in place for freshmen. Students were dropping out of school, discipline referrals were increasing, and students were struggling academically. Figures 4, 5, and 6 illustrate the number of D's and F's, the number of discipline referrals, and the percent of dropouts prior to the implementation of the transition program.

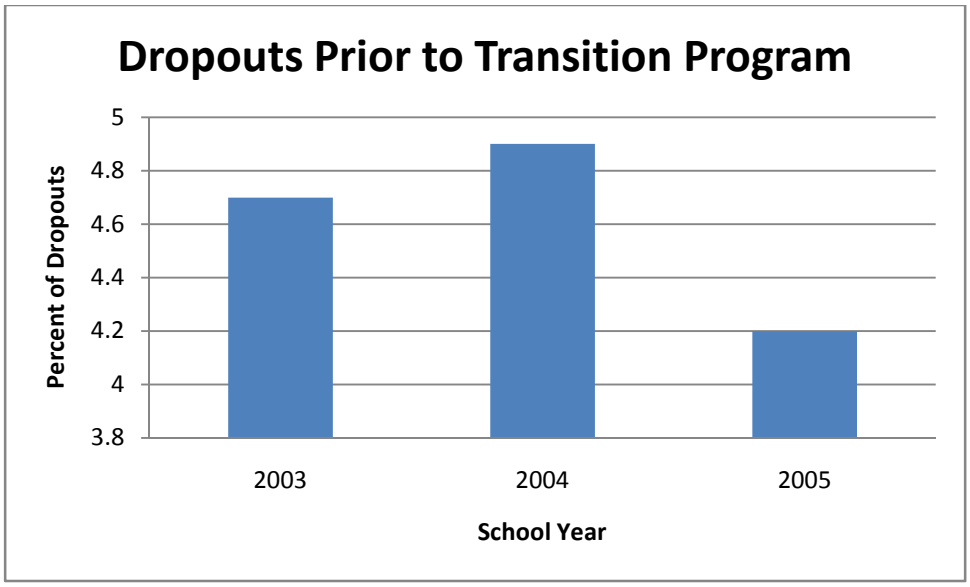


Figure 4. Dropouts Prior to Transition Program

Note. From Study School, School Information System (2008).

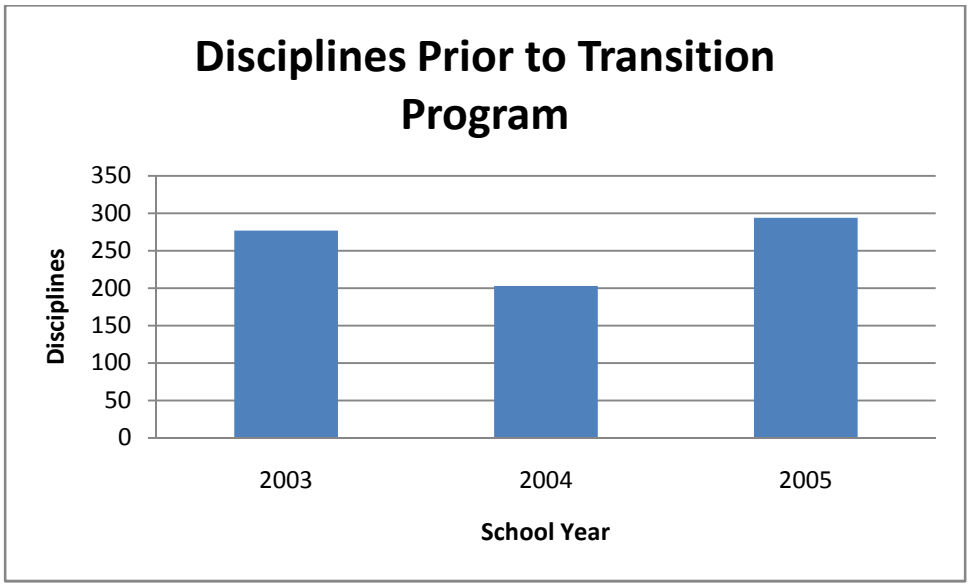


Figure 5. Disciplines Prior to Transition Program

Note. From Study School, School Information System (2008).

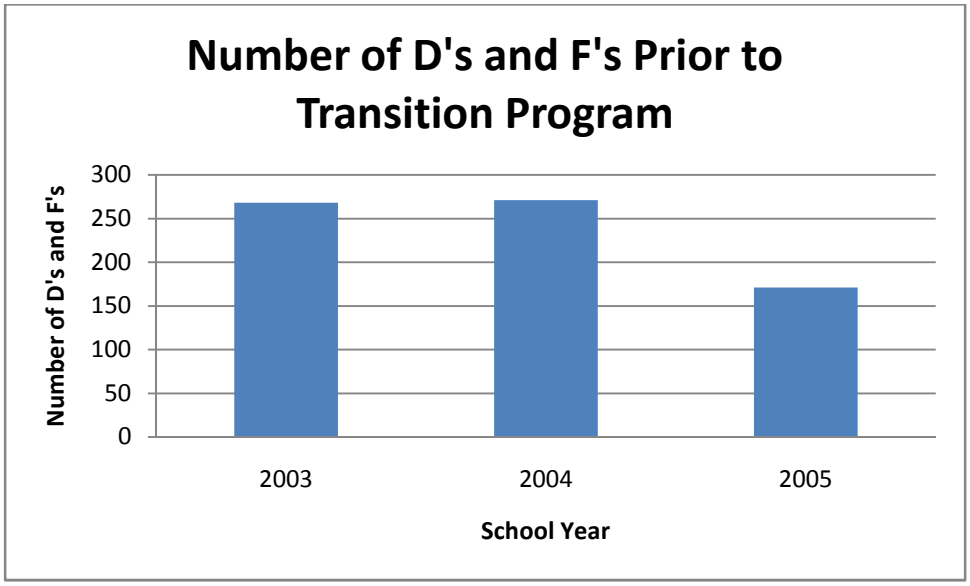


Figure 6. Number of D's and F's Prior to Transition Program

Note. From Study School, School Information System (2008).

Administrators, counselors, and teachers were searching for a way to help students be successful. Therefore, a transition program was implemented beginning in 2006-2007 school year (see Appendix A). This study compared freshman success before

the implementation of the transition program and after implementation. All data were collected from School Information System (SIS), the computer database system that the school uses to maintain data on students. Students were assigned an identification number to keep information confidential.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were the following:

1. Will implementation of a transition program result in increased grades and attendance rate?
2. Will implementation of a transition program result in decreased dropout rate and discipline referrals?

The hypotheses guiding this study were the following:

Hypothesis #1. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in attendance will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Hypothesis #2. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in grades will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Hypothesis #3. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of discipline referrals will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Hypothesis #4. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of dropouts will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

The null hypotheses guiding this study were the following:

Null hypothesis #1. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in attendance will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Null hypothesis #2. Freshmen success, as defined by an increase in grades will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Null hypothesis #3. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of discipline referrals will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Null hypothesis #4. Freshmen success, as defined by a decrease in the number of dropouts will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Tables 5 through 8 contain the data that were collected to complete the study for the school of study. Table 5 contains the raw data for grades. The number of letter grades of D and F were identified in the study. The grades show how students performed pre- and post-implementation of a freshman transition program.

Table 5

Pre- and Post-Implementation—Grades

	Letter Grade D	Letter Grade F
Pre-Implementation		
2003-2004	149	119
2004-2005	81	90
2005-2006	142	99
Post-Implementation		
2006-2007	150	119
2007-2008	115	126

Table 6 contains the aggregate data for attendance rate percentage for freshmen. The attendance rate percentage shows how students performed pre- and post-implementation of a freshman transition program.

Table 6

Pre- and Post-Implementation—Attendance Rate (%)

	Attendance Rate (%)
Pre-Implementation	
2003-2004	94.54
2004-2005	94.20
2005-2006	95.11
Post-Implementation	
2006-2007	94.04
2007-2008	92.17

Table 7 contains the aggregate data for dropout rate for freshman students. The dropout rate shows how students performed pre- and post-implementation of a freshman transition program.

Table 7

Pre- and Post-Implementation—Number of Dropouts

	Number of Dropouts
Pre-Implementation	
2003-2004	6
2004-2005	9
2005-2006	3
Post-Implementation	
2006-2007	4
2007-2008	0

Table 8 contains the aggregate data for discipline referrals. The number of discipline referrals show how freshmen students performed pre- and post-implementation of a freshman transition program.

Table 8

Pre- and Post-Implementation—Discipline Referrals

	Disciplines Referrals
Pre-Implementation	
2003-2004	277
2004-2005	203
2005-2006	294
Post-Implementation	
2006-2007	193
2007-2008	304

Descriptive Statistics

The subjects for this study in which the quantitative data were collected consisted of the freshman classes at the study school over a five year period. The pre-implementation period was from 2003 through 2006 in which the school district did not have a freshman transition program implemented. The post-implementation period was from 2006 through 2009 in which a freshman transition program was implemented.

To determine whether an implementation of a freshman transition program was successful, a *z*-test was used. This test was selected by the researcher due to the sample size being larger than 30. The researcher conducted a random sample selection of 40 data pulls from each freshman class.

Table 9

Random Sample of Initial Descriptive Statistics of the Pre/Post Implementation—Grades (the number of D's and F's)

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
Pre-Implementation Group	1.18	1.37	1.87
Post-Implementation Group	.88	.83	.69

Note: n = 40

Information about the number of students' grades of D's and F's, both pre and post-implementation of a freshman transition program can be found in Table 9. The standard deviation score changed from a 1.37 to a .83. This indicates the post-implementation scores do not vary away from the class mean far as the pre-implementation scores. This indicates that students are scoring in the lower range.

Table 10

Random Sample of Initial Descriptive Statistics of the Pre/Post Implementation—Attendance Rate (%)

	Mean	Std. Dev.
Pre-Implementation Group	94.06 .	44
Post-Implementation Group	93.01	2.27

Information about students' attendance rates, both pre and post-implementation of a freshman transition program can be found in Table 10. The standard deviation score changed from a .44 to a 2.27.

Table 11

Random Sample of Initial Descriptive Statistics of the Pre/Post Implementation—Number of Dropouts

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
Pre-Implementation Group	.025	.09	.008
Post-Implementation Group	.013	.08	.006

Note: n = 40

Information about the number of student dropouts, both pre and post-implementation of a freshman transition program can be found in Table 11. The standard deviation score changed from a .09 to a .08.

Table 12

Random Sample of Initial Descriptive Statistics of the Pre/Post Implementation—Number of Discipline Referrals

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
Pre-Implementation Group	1.16	1.51	2.29
Post-Implementation Group	1.58	1.95	3.79

Note: n = 40

Information about students' discipline referrals, both pre and post-implementation of a freshman transition program can be found in Table 12. The standard deviation reported was a 2.29 to 3.79.

Analysis of Data

The researcher used the z-test for means from two samples to compare two sets of data. "The *z*-test is a parametric statistical test used to see how far a raw score is from the mean in standard deviation units" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 210). The researcher compared the mean of grades, attendance, the number of dropouts, and the number of discipline referrals from the pre- and post- implementation years. The data for this test is contained in Tables 13 through 16.

Table 13

Independent Samples z-test for Difference in Means of Freshmen Grades (P<.05)

Pre-Mean	Post-Mean	zStat	P	zCritical
1.18	.88	1.19	.24	1.96

The hypothesis and null hypothesis tested to generate results in Table 13:

H_1: Freshman success, as defined by an increase in grades will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

The null hypothesis guiding this test was:

H_0: Freshman success, as defined by an increase in grades will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

The independent samples *z*-test did not show a significant (p = .24) difference between the mean grades of freshmen before and after implementation of the transition

program. The p value of .24 was compared to the alpha value of .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 14

Independent Samples z-test for portions of Freshmen Attendance Rates (two-tailed; P<.05)

Pre-Mean	Post-Mean	zStat	P	zCritical
94.61	94.01	1.06	3.55	1.96

The hypothesis and null hypothesis tested to generate results in Table 14:

H_1: Freshman success, as defined by an increase in attendance will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

The null hypothesis guiding this test was:

H_0: Freshman success, as defined by an increase in attendance will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

The independent samples *z*-test for portions did not show a significant (p = 3.55) difference between the mean attendance rate of freshmen before and after implementation of the transition program. The p value of 3.55 was compared to the alpha value of .05. Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 15

Independent Samples z-test for Difference in Means-number of Freshmen Dropouts(two-tailed; P<.05)

Pre-Mean	Post-Mean	zStat	P	zCritical
.03	.01	. 27	.79	1.96

The hypothesis and null hypothesis tested to generate the results in Table 15:

H_1: Freshman success, as defined by a decrease in the number of dropouts will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

The null hypothesis guiding this study was as follows:

H_0: Freshman success, as defined by a decrease in the number of dropouts will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

The independent samples *z*-test did not show a significant (p = .79) difference between the mean dropout rate of freshmen before and after implementation of the transition program. The p value of .79 was compared to the alpha value of .05. Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 16

Independent Samples z-test for Difference in Means of number of Freshmen Disciplines Referrals (two-tailed; P<.05)

Pre-Mean	Post-Mean	zStat	P	zCritical
1.16	1.58	-1.07	.29	1.96

The hypothesis and null hypothesis tested to generate the results in Table 16:

H_1: Freshman success, as defined by a decrease in the number of discipline referrals will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

The null hypothesis guiding this study were:

H_0: Freshman success, as defined by a decrease in the number of discipline referrals will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

The independent samples *z*-test did not show a significant (p = .29) difference between the mean number of discipline referrals of freshmen before and after implementation of the transition program. The p value of .29 was compared to the alpha value of .05. Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

The results of the study showed no significant difference in dropout rate, attendance rate, number of discipline referrals and grades after the implementation of a freshman transition program.

Deductive Conclusions

The data suggests there was no significant difference in the pre-implementation and post-implementation of a freshmen transition program. Therefore, the hypothesis; freshmen success, as defined by an increase in attendance and grades, and a decrease in

the number of discipline referrals and dropout rate will show a significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program, was not supported. The null hypothesis, freshmen success, as defined by an increase in attendance and grades, and a decrease in the number discipline referrals and dropout rate will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition program, was not rejected.

Summary

The results of the research provided helpful information in determining the overall effectiveness of implementing a freshmen transition program. Analysis of data from this study resulted in rejection of the hypothesis and conclusion that the null hypotheses were not rejected. The null hypothesis stated that freshmen success, as defined by an increase in attendance and grades, and a decrease in the number of discipline referrals and dropout rate will show no significant difference after the implementation of a freshman transition.

Though not statistically significant, the data showed improvement only in the dropout rate. The attendance rate, number of discipline referrals, and grades did not show improvement. The researcher had limited data to use in the study. The freshman transition program has shown encouraging results and should remain in place. Though not statistically significant, the dropout rate has shown improvement since the implementation of the program. The number of discipline referrals showed a decline in the first year but increased in the second year. This could be due to the change in discipline policy at the school of study. At the time of this writing, it is expected that discipline referrals will show a decrease in the 2008-2009 school year. As more data

becomes available, further study is recommended. The next chapter discusses results and makes recommendations.

Chapter V—Discussion

The school district of study established four building goals: (a) increase student attendance and grade point average, (b) decrease dropout rate and student discipline, (c) create a positive school climate, and (d) expand leadership roles and opportunities for students. To help meet these goals, the district implemented a freshman transition program. The transition program paired students up with a junior or senior student who helped the students with their transition to high school and with challenges they may face. The Eagle Leaders met with their group of freshman students periodically to touch base, discuss problems, and invite them to school social activities.

For many students the pathway to ninth grade from the middle school is filled with many dangers, challenges, apprehensions, and new beginnings (Roskosky, 2006). Leaving middle school quite possibly means leaving behind teachers the student became close to and friendships the student endured at the middle school level.

John Roskosky (2006) said the following:

> When the student walks into high school, they will be entering a school that is much larger than the middle school. This may also be the students' first experience with earning "credits" for classes passed and the responsibility of continuing to earn the required number of credits for graduation. The possibility of losing credits due to attendance issues will also be a new and threatening concept. Unfamiliar terms such as "Grade Point Average" and "Class Rank" will become important as they navigate

their course to high school graduation in the new setting. (p. 73)

Research has shown that freshmen have a hard time transitioning from middle school to high school. High achieving students start earning lower grades. In addition to students struggling academically, students will also start experiencing behavioral problems which results in in-school-suspensions or out-of-school suspensions (Smith, 2006).

A successful freshman transition program needs to address the issues of grades, attendance, dropouts, and discipline. The ninth grade and eighth grade teachers need to collaborate to have a successful program (Smith, 2006). A transition program at the high school level will be able to create successful social, academic, and educational and career planning experiences for students.

The study school implemented the freshman transition as an approach to increase student success. The main purpose of this study was to determine if the development of a transition program from middle school to high school was successful. Student data were collected from 2003-2004, 2004-2005, and 2005-2006 school year before the implementation of the freshman transition program. School years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 were used post-implementation of the transition program and looking at preliminary data on attendance rate, dropout, grades, and discipline, the researcher could conclude that the program is somewhat successful because the dropout rate has shown improvement and discipline referrals decreased in year one. Success will only be established after the program is in place for several years.

Implications for Schools

School administrators, counselors, and teachers must take responsibility for student achievement. The challenge educators face is how to achieve success for all students. With the proper resources and support, such as mentors, grade checks, and teambuilding lessons, the impact of a freshman transition program goes beyond a student's freshman year in high school. Positive growth in student's attitudes and behaviors can be part of the outcome.

The results of this study allowed the researcher to compare data before and after the implementation of a freshman transition program. The study did not definitively prove a strong relationship between pre and post implementation of a transition program. The study showed slight improvement in dropout rate in the two years the program was implemented. The school district will be able to look at the data and improve on the results.

Informal data gathered from teachers of the study school through faculty meetings and Professional Learning Communities (PLC) following the implementation of the transition program revealed high support. However, teachers need to receive professional development on transitioning programs. Professional development for teachers needs to include activities such as a better understanding of curriculum between middle school and high school teachers, this would better prepare students for high school classes, teachers learning about the development of young adolescents, and design activities that bring students, parents, and teachers together (Mizelle, 2000). The researcher believes the school of study needs to continue to improve on the transition program.

Recommendations

The results of this study demonstrated that by implementing a freshman transition program the study school was able to examine the attendance rate, number of discipline referrals, the number of dropouts, and the number of D's and F's. The findings of the research study encouraged the following recommendations to be made:

1. A more detailed study should be conducted after the freshman transition program has been in place for several school years. The study should encompass the social, emotional, and personal aspect of freshmen. Cauley & Jovanovich (2006) cited research by Mizelle (2000) who suggested transition activities that focus on social challenges for freshman students.
2. Provide teachers the necessary professional development to help implement a successful transition program. The professional development activities could include vertical collaboration on curriculum with middle school teachers so students are prepared academically for high school. High school teachers need to analyze data on student discipline, grades, and attendance so struggling students can be identified early and inventions put in to place. All high school teachers need to be provided professional development on the program so they have a deeper understanding of what is expected.
3. Survey and interview eighth graders and freshmen to understand their concerns about high school.
4. Survey and interview middle school and high school teachers to understand their concerns about freshman transition to high school.

5. The study should be expanded to include other school districts that have a freshman transition program in place.

Future Considerations

Recommendation for future considerations are to (a) explore students perspectives regarding school climate before and after the transition program, (b) examine the relationship between students' learning environment and behaviors, and (c) investigate the relationship between academic achievement and sub-groups.

Limitations

The researcher analyzed the effect of implementing a freshman transition program on academic achievement, specifically on improving grades, improving attendance rate, decreasing the number of discipline referrals, and decrease the number of dropouts. There are however other possible contributing factors that could have impacted the results. Dropout rate can be complicated to calculate due to parents stating students are homeschooled or the student is transferring but never does. Also, discipline referrals could increase or decrease due to a change in the school discipline policy or different teachers writing up students at different rates. Newer teachers may write up more students and thus affect the discipline statistics.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if the implementation of a freshman transition program would make a difference in student success. The data obtained included students' grades, discipline, attendance, and dropout rate. The program was designed to provide freshman students with a junior or senior leader. The Eagle Leader would be a support for the student academically and socially. Several important points

have been generated due to the implementation of the freshman transition program at the study school. It is expected that the high school will be able to continue to be proactive instead of reactive to challenges students face.

It has been concluded that a freshman transition program does have a positive effect on dropout rate. Discipline, grades, and attendance did not show improvement. The researcher suggests that the freshmen transition program be reviewed after the program has been in place for several school years. The study school should survey and interview students and staff to determine what changes, if any, need to be made to the program.

The goal of the high school educator must be to support each student as the student faces the challenges they will encounter in high school. The goal of a freshman transition program is to provide students with an awareness that people care about them. Students who have positive experiences their first year in high school, are more likely to experience success. Increased attendance, decreased discipline referrals and improved academic performance are the results.

References

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

Anfara, V., & Schmid, J., (2007). School transitions: Jeopardy or wheel of fortune? *Middle School Journal*, *39* (9)60-66.

Caruana, V. (2004). *Apples & Chalkdust*. New York, NY: Howard Books.

Cauley, K., & Jovanovich, D., (2006). Developing an effective transition program for students entering middle school or high school. *Clearing House 80* (9)15-25.

Chapman, M, & Sawyer, J., (2001). Bridging the gap for students at risk of school failure; A social work-initiated middle to high school transition program. *Children & Schools*, *23* (10)235-240.

Clark, C., & Hunley, A., (2007). Freshman academics on a shoestring. *Principal Leadership*, *7* (3)41-45.

Constantino, S., (2007). Tips for moving parents to the secondary school. *Principal Leadership*, *7* (3)35-39.

Cushman, K. (2006). Help us make the 9th grade transition. *Educational Leadership*, *63* (4)47-52.

DaGiua, B. J. (1997). A program of counseling and guidance to facilitate the transition from middle school to high school. Retrieved March 2, 2007, from http:/;/SearchERIC.org/ericdb/ED413562.htm.

Dedmond, R., Brown, R., & LaFauci., J., (2006). Freshman transition programs: long-term and comprehensive. *Principal's Research Review*, *1* (7)1-7.

Fraenkel, J., & Wallen, N. (2003). *How to design & evaluate research in education* (5th ed.). St. Louis, MO: McGraw Hill.

Futrell, M. H., & Gomez, J. (2008). How tracking creates a poverty of learning. *Educational Leadership*. *65*, (5), 74-78.

George, P. S. (1999). *A middle school---If you can keep it*: Part II. Midpoints Occasional Papers. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

Hall, Dr. M. *High School redesign: Making the transition from middle to high school*. Retrieved September 2, 2008 from www.drmikehall.com

Haviland, J. (2005). For freshmen only. *Principal Leadership*. *6* (11), 28-31.

Herlihy, C. (2007). State and district-level support for successful transitions into high school. National High School Center. Retrieved February 8, 2010, from www.betterhighschools.org

Hertzog, J. (2006). Planning for the transition to high school. *Principal Leadership*, *86* (11), 60-61.

Hertzog, J., & Morgan, L. (1999) Making the transition from middle level to high school. *The High School Magazine*. *6* (1), 26-30.

Jacobson, M. Link Crew. Retrieved September 1, 2008, from http://www.boomerangproject.com

Jacobson, M. Link Crew Survey, Retrieved February 8, 2009, from http://www.boomerangproject.com/members

Johnson, A. P. (2005). *A short guide to action research.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Kid Source (2007). Helping middle school students make the transition into high school. Retrieved March 23, 2007 from http:/kidsource.com/education/middlehigh.html

Kinney, P. (2006). Meeting special challenges in transitions. *Principal Leadership*. *6* (5), 28-30.

Kohn, B. & N, B.(2009). Creating collaborative cultures. *Educational Leadership*, *67* (10), 67-72.

Kowal, P. H. (2002).Vertical teaming: Making connections across levels. *Middle Ground*. *6* (8), 20-22.

Lampert, J. (2005). Easing the transition to high school. *Educational Leadership*, *62* (4), 61-63.

Maute, J. & Brough, J. A. (2002). The next best step. *Middle Ground*, *6* (8), 16-19.

McAdoo, M. (1999). Studies in transition: How to help adolescents navigate the path to and from middle school. *Middle Ground*, *2* (2), 21-23.

McIntosh, J. & White, S. (2006). Building for freshman success: high schools working as professional learning communities. *American Secondary Education, 34* (2), 40-49.

McLeod, S., D'Amico, J. J., & Protheroe, N. (2003). K-*12 Principals'' Guide to No Child Left Behind*. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Services.

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE), Retrieved December 9, 2008, from http://www.dese.mo.gov/schooldata/

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE), (2008, August 28). Understanding Your Adequate Yearly Progress Report. Retrieved January 19, 2009, from Missouri Department of Elementary Education Website: http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/sia/dar/UnderstandingYourAYP.pdf

Mizelle, N. (1999). Helping middle school students make the transition to high school. *ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.* Retrieved December 10, 2008, from *http://www.kidsource.com/education/middlehigh.html*

Mizelle, N. (2005). Moving out of middle school. *Educational Leadership*, *62* (4), 56-60.

Mizelle, N. & Irvin, J. (2000). Transition from middle school into high school. *Middle School Journal, 31* (5), 1-8.

Morgan, L. P., & Hertzog, C. J. (2001). Designing comprehensive transition plans. *Principal Leadership*, *1*, (4), 10-18.

National Middle School Association. (2002). Supporting students in their transition to middle school. Retrieved March 3, 2007 from http://www.nmsa.org/news/transtion.html

No Child Left Behind: A principal's desktop guide (2003). Retrieved March 1, 2007 from www.principals.org

Pinkus, L. (2006).Who's counted? Who's counting? *Alliance for Excellent Education*. (6), 1-51. Retrieved March3, 2007 from www.all4ed.org

Roderick, M., & Camburn, E. (1999). Risk and recovery from course failure in the early years of high school. *American Educational Research Journal*, *36* (2), 303-343.

Roskosky, J. (2006). Bridging the Gap between middle school eighth grade and high school ninth grade: developing a transition program. *Dissertation Abstracts International.* (UMI No. 3242133)

Scherer, M. (2002). A soccer game world. *Educational Leadership*, *59* (5), 5.

Shaughnessy, M. (2008, May, 5). No remedy left behind: Lessons from a half-decade of NCLB. *EducationNews.org*, Retrieved January 8, 2009, from http://ednews.org/articles/25373/1/An-Interview-with-Frederick-Hess-No-Remedy-Left-Behind-Lessons-from-a-Half-Decade-of-NCLB/Page1.html

Smith, J. (2006). Research summary: Transition from middle school to high school. Retrieved December 14, 2008 from http://www.nmsa.org/Research/ResearchSummaries/TransitionfromMStoHS/tabid/1087/Default.aspx

Smith, J., Feldwisch, R., & Abell, A. (2006). Similarities and differences in students' and parents' perceptions of the transition from middle school to high school. *Middle School Journal*. *29*, (6), 1-9.

Smith, J. (2007). The transition to high school: perceptions and reality. *Principal*, *87* (9), 74-75.

Smith, T. (2007). Managing the transition to ninth grade in a comprehensive urban high school. National High School Center. Retrieved February 8, 2010, from www.betterhighschools.org

Sparks, E., Johnson, J., Akos, P. (2010). Dropouts: Finding the needles in the haystack. *Educational Leadership*. *67* (5), 46-49.

Sullivan Public Schools, (2008). Student Information System, 2008 [Data file].

United States Department of Education (DOE), (2005). Adequate Yearly Progress. Retrieved November 9, 2008, from U.S. Department of Education Web site: http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/ayp/edpicks.jhtml?src=az

United States Department of Education (DOE) (2008). *No Child Left Behind (NCLB).* Retrieved on May 15, 2009, from http://www.ed/gov/nclb/landing.jhtml.

Wise, B. (2008).High schools at the tipping point. *Educational Leadership*. *65* (5), 8-13.

Wong, K., & Nicotera, A. (2007). *Successful schools and educational accountability*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.

Yates, B. (2003). Middle to high school transitions: A study of formal and informal processes. *Dissertation Abstracts International,* (UMI No. 3117740).

APPENDIX A

Descriptive Statistics

Table A1
Random Sample Cases: Number of Discipline Referrals (n= 40)

Case #	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-2007	2007-08
5	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	2	2
13	0	0	5	2	0
18	0	0	0	0	0
21	4	0	0	0	0
23	0	0	1	19	0
27	0	1	0	1	6
31	3	0	17	0	3
34	0	0	0	0	1
39	0	0	0	0	7
40	0	0	1	0	0
43	1	3	0	2	6
45	0	0	0	0	0
48	0	1	0	1	0
52	0	1	0	0	0
56	0	0	0	3	0
59	0	5	5	0	0
63	0	0	4	0	7
67	0	1	0	0	0
77	0	1	0	1	0
80	0	15	1	3	0
83	1	0	0	8	0
94	2	0	0	3	2
99	0	6	0	4	7
107	0	1	3	1	0
109	12	0	0	0	0
111	0	0	0	0	4
116	0	1	0	0	2
129	5	0	0	0	1
132	0	0	0	2	0
137	1	0	0	2	0
145	2	0	1	0	0
149	0	2	5	0	0

150	0	0	5	0	4
157	0	0	1	1	1
158	1	0	0	0	0
161	1	0	7	7	0
164	0	0	0	1	1
166	5	0	0	0	7
168	0	5	2	0	2

Table A2
Random Sample Cases: Number of D's and F's (n= 40)

Case #	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-2007	2007-08
5	2	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	1	3	0
13	0	0	1	2	0
18	0	0	0	5	0
21	5	0	1	3	0
23	2	1	0	6	0
27	5	0	0	1	8
31	0	0	1	0	0
34	0	0	0	0	1
39	0	0	0	0	2
40	0	0	0	1	1
43	4	1	0	1	3
45	0	0	0	0	0
48	0	0	0	0	0
52	0	1	0	1	1
56	0	0	0	5	0
59	5	5	8	0	0
63	0	0	1	2	8
67	2	0	0	4	0
77	0	1	8	2	0
80	0	4	3	0	0
83	0	1	0	5	0
94	3	0	0	0	5
99	8	7	0	0	6
107	2	0	5	0	1
109	4	2	0	0	0
111	0	0	5	0	5
116	0	0	2	0	0
129	0	0	0	0	0
132	5	0	0	0	0
137	0	0	3	4	0
145	1	0	0	1	1
149	0	0	4	3	0
150	2	0	4	0	0
157	8	0	2	3	1
158	0	0	3	2	0
161	2	5	0	2	0
164	0	0	0	0	1
166	0	0	0	0	4
168	0	2	0	0	2

Table A3
Random Sample Cases: Number of Dropouts (n= 40)

Case #	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-2007	2007-08
5	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0	0
18	0	0	0	0	0
21	0	0	0	0	0
23	0	0	0	0	0
27	0	0	0	0	0
31	1	0	0	0	0
34	0	0	0	0	0
39	0	0	0	0	0
40	0	0	0	0	0
43	0	0	0	0	0
45	0	0	0	0	0
48	0	0	0	0	0
52	0	0	1	0	0
56	0	0	0	0	0
59	0	0	0	0	0
63	0	0	0	0	0
67	0	0	0	0	0
77	0	0	0	0	0
80	0	0	0	0	0
83	0	0	0	0	0
94	0	0	0	0	0
99	0	0	0	0	0
107	0	0	0	0	0
109	0	0	0	1	0
111	0	0	0	0	0
116	0	0	0	0	0
129	0	0	0	0	0
132	0	0	0	0	0
137	0	0	0	0	0
145	0	0	0	0	0
149	0	0	0	0	0
150	0	0	0	0	0
157	0	0	1	0	0
158	0	0	0	0	0
161	0	0	0	0	0
164	0	0	0	0	0
166	0	0	0	0	0
168	0	0	0	0	0

Table A4

Attendance Percentage

2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-2007	2007-08
94.54	*94.2*	*95.11*	*94.04*	*92.17*

Table A5

z-Test: Two Sample for Means---Number of Dropouts

	Variable 1	*Variable 2*
Mean	0.025	0.0125
Known Variance	0.008	0.079
Observations	40	40
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
z	0.268028134	
P(Z<=z) one-tail	0.394338832	
z Critical one-tail	1.644853627	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.788677663	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

N= 40
p = .05

Table A6

z-Test: Two Sample for Means---Number of D's and F's

	Variable 1	*Variable 2*
Mean	1.183333	0.883333333
Known Variance	1.87	0.69
Observations	40	40
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
z	1.185854	
P(Z<=z) one-tail	0.11784	
z Critical one-tail	1.644854	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.23568	
z Critical two-tail	1.959964	

N=40
p = .05

Table A7

z-Test: Two Sample for Means---Number of Discipline Referrals

	Variable 1	*Variable 2*
Mean	1.158333333	1.575
Known Variance	2.29	3.79
Observations	40	40
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
z	-1.06872745	
P(Z<=z) one-tail	0.142596249	
z Critical one-tail	1.644853627	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.285192499	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

N= 40
p = .05

Table A8

z-Test for proportions--Attendance

$$\frac{(P_1\text{-}P_2) - (P_1\text{-}P_2)}{\sqrt{\overline{pq}(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2})}}$$

$$\frac{(.946) - (.930)}{\sqrt{\overline{(.940)(.06)}(\frac{1}{669} + \frac{1}{402})}}$$

$$= \frac{.016}{.015}$$

$$= 1.06$$

APPENDIX B

Sullivan High School

Freshman Transition Program

Overview

Sullivan High School transition program was designed to address four goals:

- increase student attendance and grade point average
- decrease dropout rate and student discipline
- create a positive school climate
- expand leadership roles and opportunities for students

The phases of the program are:

- Potential Student Leaders are invited to become members by teachers
- Student Leaders attend an overview of the program in March
- Student Leaders attend a one day development day in May
- Student Leaders attend a two day training session in August
- Student Leaders host Freshman Orientation in August
- Students stay connected with freshman throughout the school year through advisory, freshman only social events, and academic follow-ups.

What does an Eagle Leader do?

Eagle Leaders are trained to work with the incoming freshman class and other new students who are entering Sullivan High School next fall. After the extensive training, the Eagle Leader will be given a small group of freshmen to work with that day and will be asked to befriend and to help that group during the first week of school with any challenges they may face. Periodically during the school year, Eagle Leaders will meet again with their student groups to touch base, discuss problems, and plan social activities. We know the more contact a freshman has with his/her link the more successful that freshman will be.

Summary

The freshman transition program has proven to provide students with an easier transition into high school. Students enjoy having a senior or junior mentor throughout the school year. The transition program has also led to benefits such as: 1) better student/teacher relationships, 2) improved school climate, 3) develop leadership skills in students.

Appendix C-1 through C-6 is parts of the program at Sullivan High School.

APPENDIX C-1

Teacher Name: _____

Eagle CREW 2006-2007

Staff Recommendation Form

We are looking for up to 50 of this year's junior (next year's seniors), and sophomores (next year's juniors) to "link" the incoming freshman class to upperclassmen; students who show both traditional and nontraditional leadership. Please take a moment to think about the students that you know here at Sullivan High School who would be awesome leaders. Write their names down, and we will invite them to apply to be leaders.

Qualities we are looking for in leaders:

- ✓ **Strong communication skills**
- ✓ **Willingness to lead others**
- ✓ **Responsibility to manage a group**
- ✓ **Accountability to show up throughout all phases of the program**
- ✓ **Willingness to take risks**
- ✓ **Interest in the program**
- ✓ **Positive role model**
- ✓ **Dedication**
- ✓ **Self-confidence and self-directedness**
- ✓ **Respectful of diverse ideas and personalities**
- ✓ **Enthusiasm**

Student Name: _____Current Year in School _____

Student Name: _____Current Year in School _____

Student Name: _____Current Year in School _____

Student Name: _____Current Year in School _____

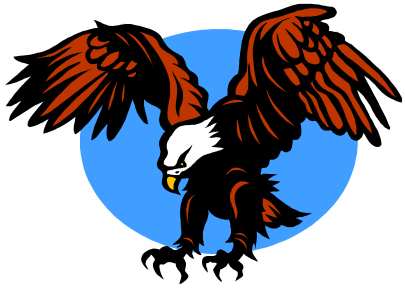
Student Name: _____Current Year in School _____

We will also need some adult help—not necessarily on the orientation day, but in getting everything organized.

May we call on you?

- ☐ Nice idea, but I'm busy from now until next year.
- ☐ Yes, I'd love to help.

Thanks!!



APPENDIX C-2

SULLIVAN HIGH SCHOOL EAGLE CREW PROGRAM

April 17, 2007

You are invited to be a member of Sullivan High School Eagle Crew Leaders! You have been recommended by your teachers as a student who fits the profile of a potential Eagle Leader. We are looking for students who could help us get this new program off the ground in the 2007-2008 school year. Eagle Leaders are upperclassmen who are good role models for younger students and who have been successful at Sullivan High School. Eagle Leaders' communication skills, leadership potential, responsibility, and personality have helped them succeed in the high school environment, and the lessons they have learned should be shared to help others succeed. We would like for you to be involved in our program. You could have a tremendous influence on the students you work with and will learn many valuable leadership skills in the process. Plus, it will be fun exciting way to spice up your experience here at SHS.

WHAT DOES A EAGLE LEADER DO?

Eagle Leaders are trained to work with the incoming freshman class and other new students who are entering Sullivan High School next fall. After the extensive training, the Eagle Leader will be given a small group of freshmen to work with that day and will be asked to befriend and to help that group during the first week of school with any challenges they may face. Periodically during the school year, Eagle Leaders will meet again with their student groups to touch base, discuss problems, and plan social activities. We know the more contact a freshman has with his/her Link the more successful that freshman will be.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Come to one of the informational meetings and pick up an application form. We look forward to working with you; know that the freshmen will benefit from having you as a mentor and friend. We look forward to seeing you at one of the meetings!

INFORMATIONAL MEETING DATES

April 24th @ 7:30 a.m. Choir Room
April 25th @ 3:00 p.m. Choir Room
April 25th @ 7:30 p.m. Choir Room

If you have additional questions or cannot attend one of the meetings, please see *Mrs. Schmidt, Mrs. Thornsberry, Mrs. Brandt, Ms. Lewis, or Mrs. Parnell.*

APPENDIX C-3

APPLICATION
EAGLE CREW 2006-2007

Name _____

Year of Graduation _____

Please list your schedule:

	CLASS	TEACHER
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____

Advisor _____

Below are dates and events you are required to attend as an Eagle Leader; please make sure you are available to attend these events before you apply.

- **May Development Day**: Friday, May 12, 2006, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
- **Eagle Leader Training**: Tuesday, August 8, 2006, 4:00 PM – 9:00 PM and Wednesday, August 9, 2006, 4:00 PM – 9:00 PM
- **Freshman Orientation**: Friday, August 11, 2006, 7:30 AM – 12:30 PM
- **First Day of School**: Wednesday, August 16, 2006; wear your Eagle Leader Shirt and help freshmen with directions and questions

Please write a half to full page of "Why I Would Like To Be A Eagle Crew Member."
******Due to Mrs. Thornsberry by 3:30 PM, Tuesday, May 2.*******

On the back please write your summer address and phone number

APPENDIX C-4

May 2, 2007

Dear Eagle Crew Applicant:

Congratulations! You have been selected as a Eagle Crew Leader for the 2007-2008 school year.

Below are the times and dates that you need to mark on your calendar!

Just a reminder: If you miss any of these days or if you are late, you will no longer be a Eagle Crew Leader. You will <u>not</u> be allowed to enter late. Arrive early!!!!

- **May Development Day: *<u>DATE CHANGE!!!</u>***
  - **Thursday, May 10, 2007, 7:25 AM – 9:30 AM**
    - **Please fill out a work-in-advance form for 1st block**

- **Eagle Leader Training:**
  - **Tuesday, August 7, 2007, 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM**
  - **Wednesday, August 8, 2007, 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM**

- **Freshmen Orientation:**
  - **Friday, August 10, 2007, 7:30 AM – 12:30 PM**

- **First Day of School:**
  - **Wednesday, August 15, 2007; wear your Eagle Leader Shirt and help freshmen with directions and questions**

We look forward to working with you.

APPENDIX C-5

SAMPLE TRAINING AGENDAS

May Development Day

1) **Welcome**

2) **Partner Tag- Double Partner Tag**

3) **Eagle Leaders split off into small groups with coordinators**

- **Count Off** (play and hear the set-up)
- **Hot Handle** (play and discuss importance of knowing each student's name in your crew)
- **Team Juggling** (discuss importance of building the group's ability to work in a group/ knowing what you can accomplish as a team then play)
- **64 Squares** (show the power of presentation/ close with a great tie in story discuss importance of the activity/ shows the difference between the games and the purposeful experience for the freshman)
- **"What Every Freshman Should Know"** (take a piece of paper from the 64 square board and give them a pencil/ make list of 3 most important things a fresh should know about success in high school/ what do they wish someone would have told them when they were fresh/ highlight important ones
- **Create reminder post cards/ Get T-shirt sizes/ Pick T-shirt design**

4) **Closure**

Materials: straws, 24 paper tape balls, plain paper, bags to pack materials for coordinators, CDs of music for Friday

May 12th 7pm-9pm

Day One – Training Link Leaders (MAIN GYM)

Team Building

1) Opening assembly bit up to balloon pop.

2) Birdie on a Perch (4 partners)

3) People – Tigers – Traps (join partner from birdie)

4) From PTT place in balanced groups of eight.

5) Have individuals number off within their groups, do Questions List.

6) Quick Check-In: "How many of you are more comfortable now than when you first got here?"
"This is what Eagle Crew is all about, making new students feel comfortable."

Discuss Eagle Crew (EC) concept (Four Aspects)

1) Building relationships and encouraging participation

2) Changes the relationship between new students and our school, and of link leader to school.

3) EC sets the tone for entire school year, not only for Frosh, but for whole school because of eagle leader's commitment.

4) ECs success depends on the leader's ability to model what they want their school to be.

REMEMBER: "You must be the change you want to see in OUR SCHOOL"

Train Leaders for Session One of Orientation

- Hand out handbooks and writing utensils
- Now is the time to get focused on learning how to lead the activities on the day of orientation.
- (Emphasize the relevance of each activity and the transitions between each activity.)

Leader Introduction

1) A good introduction establishes the tone for the group.

2) Model my intro to whole group.

3) Notice the things I put into my intro.

4) Brainstorm what they can put in their own intros (Write down list in handbooks.)

5) Partner up (HAPPY SALMON partner)
- One partner practice intro for one minute
- Ask group what was easy/ hard about intro
- Other partner practices for one minute

(do a MESSY HIGH FIVE for excellent intros)

6) Brainstorm/ write down things to remember about a good intro

7) Don't rush! GO SLOW TO GO FAST!

(Remember transitions and relevance!)

8) Start writing in the Elements of Excellence part of handbook.

"Create relevance for and transitions for each activity."

Count Off

1) Set up activity to whole group.

2) Let groups play one time through. (If one group gets it before the others, have them play with eyes closed)

3) Review set up (include relevance/ transitions) and rules with large group using call and response seeing what they can remember.

4) Repeat rules in large group and review rules in small groups using the DOUBLE TOP SECRET method.

5) Practice: In partners (NEWS ANCHOR partners)
- One partner practice set up (include relevance and transitions)
- Switch and let other partner practice.
- (Celebrate by chanting 10,9,8,7,6,...silent 1)

6) Review as a large group a final time.

–15 MINUTE HEALTHY SNACK BREAK–
Commons area

Hot Handle

1) Begin set up with the whole group (transition and relevance)
- Name and significance (play)
- Name and repeat (play)
- Take off name tags (play)
- Alphabetize (play)

2) Once groups alphabetizes, I step in a central group to fishbowl set up for the NAME TAG portion. (After set up, let group play)
Element of excellence: "Stop activities before they get boring"

3) Review set up as a whole group using call and response. Review 5 steps of hot handle as well as rules for Name Tag.

4) Practice set up in partners (UDDER partners)
- One leader sets up the entire activity including relevance and transitions.
- Other partner sets up activity, etc.

5) Have one person set up entire activity for the groups (use middle names) Play all the way through.

Celebrate: HIT A HOME RUN/ HIGH FIVE YOUR TEAM

REVIEW: Small group Turbo review

Team Juggling – use the jigsaw fishbowl method
Break the activity into two parts (first 7 steps)

1) Jigsaw fishbowl the first seven steps with one person from each group up until rolling the paper tape balls.

2) Send reps back to groups to repeat the first 7 steps and play with group.

3) Bring back the reps to the front and finish demo of the rest of team juggling.

4) Send reps back to finish demo of rest of game in their own groups.

5) Review key concepts of set up with whole group. (the gradual movement from sitting to kneeling, to standing, to adding the tape balls.)

6) Review in small group using YOU"RE IT review method.

7) Review in partners (JEDI partners), using RAPID FIRE review.

8) Practice: One leader from group sets up (including relevance and transitions) and plays activity all the way thru.

Celebrate him/ her: SHOOT OFF YOUR FIREWORKS

Life story

1) Teach life story to the whole group. Take them through entire activity.

2) Review steps of process, read thru handbook, point out and explain little things that you did that make a difference.

- Turning outward from circle when writing
- assigning the first partner
- mixing the genders
- sitting hip to hip facing the same direction
- longer hair goes first for sharing

Practice not needed

Questions List

1) Use fishbowl method for just a few questions

2) Review steps of the process using handbooks.

3) Practice: Have one leader set up (including transitions and relevance) and facilitate the entire activity.

Celebrate with 3 CLAPS AND A TOP DOG SALUTE

4) Explain that the leader gets to answer a question. Demonstrate to your leader how that is done.

Closure

1) Remind of the times for tomorrow and any other details needed to be covered.

2) Close the day in a fun or motivating way. Movie clip/ fun game.

3) Leave them feeling good about what they are doing. They are a valuable part of our school and what they are doing makes a difference.

APPENDIX C-6

THE STAFF AND STUDENTS OF

Sullivan High School

INVITE THE

Class of 2011

TO OUR SECOND ANNUAL EAGLE CREW FRESHMAN ORIENTATION

8:00 AM – 12:30 PM

August 10, 2007

SULLIVAN HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM

The purpose of this orientation is to make the transition from middle school to high school a positive one. Seniors and juniors will be serving as leaders and mentors to the freshmen. Large and small group activities are designed to address students' needs and concerns in an enjoyable manner. Wear comfortable clothes! Pizza will be served for lunch.

Bring the enclosed picture form with you to orientation as after lunch you will be able to get your picture taken. You will also pick up your schedule and receive your locker assignment. Five forms were sent to your parents in a separate mailing. If your parents did not turn them in on Thursday night, bring them with you Friday morning. If you have any questions, please call Eagle Crew Coordinators Mrs. Schmidt, Mrs. Thornsberry, Ms. Russell, Mrs. Parnell, or Ms. Lewis at 573-468-5181.

APPENDIX D

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY

Application for IRB Review of Research Proposal Involving Human Subjects

1. Title of Project:

Project # _____
(To be filled out by IRB chairman)

Freshmen transition and its effectiveness on student achievement

2. Faculty Advisor:	Department:	Extension:	e-mail:
John Feely	**Education**	**636-949-4481**	**jfeely@lindenwood.edu**

3. Primary Investigator(s):	Department:	Local phone:	e-mail:
Jana Thornsberry	**Sullivan High School**	**573-468-7688**	**jana@eagles.k12.mo.us**

4. Anticipated starting date for this project: **December 1, 2007**

5. Anticipated ending date for this project: **December 1, 2008**

6. State the hypothesis of the proposed research project:

Hypotheses: There is a significant difference in freshmen achievement after implementing a freshmen transition program.

Null Hypotheses: There is no significant difference in freshmen achievement after implementing a freshmen transition program.

A Paired-Sample t-test will be used to measure significant differences in mean GPA, attendance, number of discipline referrals, and number of drop outs.

7. State the purpose (objectives) and rationale of the proposed project. Include any questions to be investigated.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine if the implementation of a freshman transition program would make a difference in student achievement. The study will review attendance, grades, discipline, and drop out rate.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale for the study was to identify the effectiveness of a freshman transition program. No Child Left Behind has made student achievement a major concern in each school district. A successful freshmen transition program could help a district address several of these issues.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. NCLB focuses on school districts being accountable for student achievement. School districts look at adequate yearly progress (AYP) to see if they have achieved goals set by NCLB. Student achievement is a major concern in all public schools and NCLB has made each school district focus on student achievement. By the year 2013-2014, school districts should have all students achieving at the proficient level of academic achievement set by NCLB (Principals Guide to No Child Left Behind, 2003).

School administrators, counselors, and teachers must take responsibility for student achievement. With the proper resources and support, the impact of a freshmen transition program goes beyond a student's freshmen year in high school. Positive growth in student's attitudes and behaviors can be part of the outcome.

The transition program at the high school level will be able to create successful social, academic, and education/career planning experiences for students, if the program is successful. The goal of a freshmen transition program is to provide students with an awareness that people care about them. Students who have positive experiences their first year in high school, are more likely to experience success.

8. Has this research project been reviewed or is it currently being reviewed by an IRB at another institution? If so, please state when, where and disposition (approval/non-approval/pending).

No

9. Participants involved in the study:

a. Indicate how many persons will be recruited as potential participants in this study.

LU participants	_____	Undergraduate students
	_____	Graduate students
	_____	Faculty and/or staff
Non-LU participants	_____	Children
	_____	Adolescents
	_____	Adults
	_____	Seniors
	_____	Persons in institutional settings (e.g. nursing homes, correctional facilities, etc.)

Other (specify):
Student achievement data from the freshmen class at Sullivan High School. Data will come from data already collect from the Student Information System (SIS) database and from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The website is www.dese.mo.gov/planning/profile/036137.html

b. From what source(s) will the potential participants be recruited?

_____ LU undergraduate and/or graduate classes
_____ LU Human Subject Pool (LU HSP)
_____ Other LU sources (specify) _____
__X__ School boards (districts) *Sullivan Public Schools and Sullivan High School*
_____ Greater St. Charles community
_____ Agencies (please list) _____
_____ Businesses (please list) _____

_____ Health care settings, nursing homes, etc. (please list) _____

Other (specify):

Attached is a permission form from the assistant superintendent of Sullivan School District.

c. If any persons within the selected group(s) are being excluded, please explain who is being excluded and why. (Note: According to the Office of LU HSP, all students within the LU Human Subject Pool must be allowed to participate, although exclusion of certain subjects may be made when analyzing data.)

None

d. Describe how and by whom the potential participants will be recruited. Provide a copy of any materials to be used for recruitment (e.g. posters, flyers, advertisements, letters, telephone and other verbal scripts).
Students will not be recruited since the source of the information used in this study will be from DESE data and Sullivan High School's student information system.

e. Where will the study take place?

_____ On campus – Explain:

__**X**___ Off campus – Explain: **Data will be collected from student information system accessible to administrative school personnel in the Sullivan School District.**

10. Methodology/procedures:

a. Provide a sequential description of the procedures to be used in this study.

Quantitative data will be collected from the Sullivan School Districts' school information system (SIS). The data will be collected from a five year span from 2003 - 2008 school year. Freshmen students' grades, number of discipline referrals, attendance, and drop out rate will be collected and compared. It will be assumed that both the dependent and independent variables of the study are equally distributed throughout the study's population. The baseline for the study will be the 2003 school year.

The data will be compared to determine if implementing a freshmen transition program made a difference in freshmen achievement.

Information gathered will be analyzed, specifically looking at increases and decreases in the areas of grades, discipline, attendance, and drop out rate from the freshmen class.

The Paired-Sample t-test will be used to analyze the data collected. This test was selected due to the small sample size the researcher had to analyze the data. The researcher will compare the mean of grades, attendance, drop out rate, and disciplines from the pre- and post- implementation years.

b. Which of the following procedures will be used? Provide a copy of all materials to be used in this study.

_____ Survey(s) or questionnaire(s) (mail-back)-Are they standardized?
_____ Survey(s) or questionnaire(s) (in person)-Are they standardized?
_____ Computer-administered task(s) or survey(s)-Are they standardized?
_____ Interview(s) (in person)
_____ Interview(s) (by telephone)
_____ Focus group(s)
_____ Audiotaping
_____ Videotaping
__X__ Analysis of secondary data (no involvement with human participants)
_____ Invasive physiological measurement (e.g. venipuncture, catheter insertion, muscle biopsy, collection of other tissues, etc.) Explain:

_____ Other (Specify):

11. How will results of this research be made accessible to participants? Explain and attach a copy of any forms that will be used.

This project will be available to administrators and teachers in the Sullivan School District and the Lindenwood University. The project will be placed in the Sullivan School District professional library and Lindenwood University Education Library.

12. Potential Benefits and Compensation from the Study:

a. Identify and describe anticipated benefits (health, psychological or social benefits) to the participants from their involvement in the project.

The study will benefit future administrators. They will gain knowledge from the results of the study when planning for future transition programs for freshmen. If the results of the research show increased student achievement with the implementation of a successful freshmen transition program, then future students may benefit from the program.

b. Identify and describe any known or anticipated benefits to society from this study.

Based on the hypotheses that there will be a significant difference in freshmen achievement after implementing a freshmen transition program, one potential benefit is that districts could use the information to help better prepare students for high school and transition them into college.

c. Describe any anticipated compensation (monetary, grades, extra credit, other) to participants.

There will be no compensation given to the participants

13. Potential Risks from the Study:

a. Identify and describe any known or anticipated risks to participants involved in this study. Include physiological, psychological, emotional, social, economic, legal, etc. risks/stressors. A study-specific medical screening form must be included when physiological assessments are used

and associated risk(s) to participants are greater than what would be expected in normal daily activities.

None

b. Will deception be used in this study? If so, explain the rationale.

No

c. Does this project involve information about sensitive behavior, such as sexual behavior, drug/ alcohol use, or illegal behavior? If so, explain.

No

d. Are vulnerable populations (children, institutionalized persons, pregnant women, persons with impaired judgment) used as subjects for this study? If so, explain.

No

e. Describe the procedures or safeguards in place to protect the physical and psychological health of the participants in light of the risks/stresses identified above. Include procedures in place for handling any adverse events, referral services, etc.

To ensure safety of the participants, neither their names nor student id numbers will ever be used in the study. The secondary data is obtained from the school database system. School administrators are the only individuals that have access to the data.

14. Informed Consent Process:

a. What process will be used to inform the potential participants about the study details and to obtain their consent for participation?

_____ Information letter with written consent form for participants or their legally authorized agents; provide a copy.
__**X**__ Information letter with written or verbal consent from director of institutions involved; provide a copy.
_____ Information letter with written or verbal consent from teachers in classrooms or daycare; provide a copy.

Other (specify):

b. What special provisions have been made for informed consent for non-English speaking persons, mentally disabled or other populations for whom there may be difficulty in providing informed consent?

Does Not Apply

15. Anonymity of Participants and Confidentiality of Data:

a. Explain the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and confidentiality of data both during the research and in the release of the findings.

Individual data by student name is not shared with general public. School district administrators only have access to individual student data that is obtained from the student information system (SIS). The secondary data that will be obtained is available to the public from the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education. Individuals can obtain this information from www.dese.mo.gov/planning/profile/036137.html

b. How will confidentiality be explained to participants?

Secondary data will be used with knowledge of the school district. The data will be obtained from the school information system. Administrators only have access to the data. Individual data will not be listed for public viewing. Specifically, there is no personal contact with students, student number or any other way to identify individual students.

c. Indicate the duration and location of secure data storage and the method to be used for final disposition of the data.

Paper Records
_____ Confidential shredding after _____ years.
__X__ Data will be retained indefinitely in a secure location.
_____ Data will be retained until completion of specific course and then destroyed.

Audio/video Recordings
_____ Erasing of audio/video tapes after _____ years.
_____ Data will be retained indefinitely in a secure location.
_____ Data will be retained until completion of specific course and then destroyed.

Electronic Data
_____ Erasing of electronic data after _____ years.
__X__ Data will be retained indefinitely in a secure location.
_____ Data will be retained until completion of specific course and then destroyed.

Other:

Specify Location:

Student grades, discipline, attendance, and drop out records are kept in district archives and electronically in student information systems. Also, information is reported in a core data report to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

16. Researchers must ensure that all supporting materials/documentation for their applications are submitted with the signed, hard copies of the IRB Research Proposal Form. Please check below all appendices that are attached as part of your application package. Submission of an incomplete application package will increase the duration of the IRB review process.

_____ Recruitment materials: A copy of any posters, fliers, advertisements, letters, telephone or other verbal scripts used to recruit/gain access to participants (see 9d).
_____ Materials: A copy of all surveys, questionnaires, interview questions, interview themes/sample questions for open-ended interviews, focus group questions, or any standardized tests used to collect data (see 10b).
_____ Feedback letter (see 11).
_____ Medical screening Form: Must be included for all physiological measurements involving greater than minimal risk, and tailored for each study (see 13a).

_____ Information letter and consent forms used in studies involving interaction with participants (see 14a).
_____ Information/Cover letters used in studies involving surveys or questionnaires (see 14a).
_____ Parent information letter and permission form for studies involving minors (see 14a).
_____ Other:

I certify the information in this proposal is complete and accurate.

Signature of Doctoral Committee Member	Date 10/29/2007
Signature of Doctoral Committee Member	Date 10/29/07
Signature of Doctoral Committee Member	Date 10/29/07
Signature of Doctoral Committee Member	Date 10/29/07
Signature of Doctoral Committee Member	Date
Signature of Primary Investigator	Date 10-29-07
Signature of Primary Investigator	Date

Adapted, in part, from LU Ethics Form
8/03

08-28
IRB Project Number

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board Disposition Report

To: Jana Thornsberry

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the proposal for research:

Freshman transition and its effectiveness on student achievement.

The Institutional Review Board:

XXXX **Approves the revised proposal.**

Tammi Pavelec 4/9/2008

Signature IRB Chair **Date**

Petition for Doctoral Capstone Experience Committee

Date 10/29/07 Name of Student Jana Thornsberry Email janaeagles.k12.mo.us

Indicate X New Petition or _____ REINSTATEMENT PETITION (semester last attended:_____)

Tentative Capstone Experience Title: (if New Petition)

**If New Petition, YOU MUST FILL OUT FIVE CHOICES, OTHERWISE the Assignment Committee will assign advisors based on availability. REINSTATED STUDENTS are not guaranteed their previous advisor. ** Please attach professional vita for persons external to Lindenwood University who will serve as a committee member. Distribute to: Student, Capstone Experience Chair, and EdD Advisor.

Priority Request for Capstone Chair John Feely

Rationale: Current Academic Advisor for my Doctoral Program

Capstone Chair Signature: John W. Feely Date: 10/29/2007

First Priority Request for Capstone Committee Member: DR. Mike Prater

Rationale: DR. Prater served as my Stats teacher for my Ed.S Degree

Committee Member Signature: Mike Prater Date: 10/1/07

Second Priority Request for Capstone Committee Member: DR Terry Stewart

Rationale: DR Stewart currently teaches classes for Lindenwood

Committee Member Signature: Terry Stewart Date: 10-29-07

Request for Capstone Peer Committee Member: Stephanie Mountain

Rationale: Mrs. Mountain serves as a 5th grade teacher + classmate

Committee Peer Signature: SM Mountain Date: 10-29-07

Request for Capstone Peer Committee Member: Jeff Beiswinger

Rationale: Mr. Beiswinger currently is an assistant principal + classmate

Committee Peer Signature: Jeffrey Beiswinger Date: 10/29/07

Student Signature Jana Thornsberry Date 10/29/07 Anticipated Completion Date: Dec 2008

APPROVALS: EdD Advisor:_____ Date:_____

Division/Program Dean:_____ Date:_____

Sullivan School District

138 Taylor Street
Sullivan, Missouri 63080
(573)-468-5171
Fax: (573-468-7720

Dr. Mickie L. Shank
Superintendent of Schools

Stephen M. Laub, Ph.D
Deputy Superintendent

Terri A. Parks
Assistant Superintendent of CIA

October 26, 2007

Dear Lindenwood University:

Mrs. Jana Thornsberry has permission to use data from our district in an effort to complete accurate research for her dissertation project for your university. It is our understanding that this information will remain anonymous pertaining to any specific student data, and will only be used for research purposes to fulfill strict dissertation guidelines.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Terri A. Parks
Assistant Superintendent of CIA
Sullivan School District

Vitaé

Jana (Payne) Thornsberry was born in 1972 in Sullivan, Missouri. She graduated from Sullivan High School in May of 1991. Mrs. Thornsberry attended East Central College in Union, Missouri in the fall of 1991 on a volleyball scholarship. Mrs. Thornsberry played for two years at East Central College before attending the University of Missouri—St. Louis. Mrs. Thornsberry completed her Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Education in December of 1995.

Mrs. Thornsberry continued her education at Lindenwood University, St. Charles, Missouri in 2000. She completed her Masters of Art in Administration in December 2001 and completed her Specialist degree in May 2007.

Mrs. Thornsberry and her husband Jeff have three children—Christopher, Jena, and Ty. They currently reside in Sullivan, Missouri and they both work in the Sullivan School District.

Mrs. Thornsberry has accumulated 13 years in education in the classroom, as a coach, A+ coordinator, assistant principal and currently as Principal at Sullivan Middle School.