A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF A SUMMER SCHOOL INTERVENTION PROGRAM ON NINTH GRADE TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

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A Dissertation

by

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Student: Hasan Abdulmalik

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this dissertation is suitable for shelving in the library and credit is to be awarded for the dissertation.

___________________________, Graduate Coordinator
Jose Chaves, Ph.D. 

_________________
Date
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory

of three people that always believed in my ability:

My mother Mildred Gray, grandmother Leona Mosley,

and mentor Dr. Lila Jacobs.
Abstract

of

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ABSTRACT

Ninth grade transition to high school marks a critical educational juncture and a significant event in the lives of adolescents. This is a pivotal year where transitioning students suddenly find themselves struggling to navigate large, impersonal, and competitive environments. In school districts across the United States the enormity of the problem associated with ninth grade transition cannot be understated. Educators struggle to improve the overall success rate for these students because ninth grade is the most failed grade in public school.

The purpose of this quasi-experimental research study was to analyze the impact of a summer school intervention program that focused on preparing students for the transition to high school. The study analyzed critical components associated with high school transition, achievement, and success for 120 students in the Sacramento, California area. The findings from this study will add valuable insight to the body of knowledge and
research that currently exists for the development and implementation of ninth grade
transition to high school programs. The study has identified trends, practices, and
negative factors that are alarming. The significance of socioeconomic conditions and
ethnicity has compounded the systemic failure of ninth graders in suburban and urban
high schools. Academic achievement, student behavior and attendance are the three
overarching areas that have been identified as needing intervention. If left unattended this
issue will have a profound and devastating effect on student outcomes, increased
dropouts rate, school budgets, and forecasts a dismal future for students of color in public
schools. The study used quantitative research methods that examined the relationship and
significance between multiple variables in the three general areas of academics, behavior
and attendance. An analysis of descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and t-tests
examined the variables and found that there were varying degrees of difference, but there
was no significant relationship between the two groups in the study.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The transition from middle to high school presents challenges and is a significant event in the lives of adolescents (Kerr, 2002; Reyes, Gillock, Kobus & Sanchez, 2000). The transition into ninth grade is a serious concern for many school districts throughout the United States. Ninth grade is a pivotal year where students suddenly find themselves struggling to navigate large, impersonal, and competitive environments. This major transitional year creates a “holding tank” otherwise known as the “ninth grade bulge” where some twenty five percent of students that fail the ninth grade are held for another year (Black, 2004). Furthermore, this failure also dramatically increases the likelihood that students will not finish high school. In the last 30 years, the bulge of students retained in the ninth grade has more than tripled from approximately 4% to 13% (Haney & Morgan, 2004). In a study of four urban school districts Kemple, Herlihy and Smith (2005) find that as many as 40 percent of students fail to get promoted from ninth to tenth grade on time, and fewer than 20 percent of those students recover from failure and go on to graduate.

Educators have analyzed high school transition since the reorganization of secondary school in the 1980’s. The reorganization of secondary school moved the ninth grade into high school and created the 9-12 grade configurations seen in the majority of today’s high schools (Kerr, 2002). For over three decades educators have been perplexed and struggled to find the right educational model to accommodate the transition of ninth grade into a comprehensive high school (Alexander & George, 1981).
In fact, the placement of the ninth grade in high schools presents several challenges to educational leaders. For instance, these students account for high numbers of “F” grades in core subjects, lack of credits by the end of the freshman year, and account for attendance problems, especially in the beginning of the first semester (Jerald, 2006). Much of the research (Haney & Morgan, 2004; Kemple, Herlihy, & Smith, 2005) points to ninth grade as a “make it or break it year” for students being on track to graduate. According to Bridgeland (2006), it is during the freshman year that many students lose their desire for school. Students fail core courses in the ninth grade and then must repeat these core academic courses again in the tenth grade. Students in ninth grade make up the highest percentage of students in high school because a disproportionate number of ninth graders fail to be promoted out of ninth grade (Wheelock & Miao, 2005). Due to the persistent rate of ninth grade student failures they do not acquire enough credits for promotion. This persistent failure rate impacts what students consider the “fun” part of school, such as the option of selecting elective courses or extracurricular eligibility, which are no longer available. The vicious cycle continues in the upper grades with more failure, summer school, night school, credit recovery programs and failure to meet proficiency standards (Fields, 2005).

High school reform initiatives by school districts across the country have focused on student learning and achievement through restructuring models and intervention programs (Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993). Both restructuring models and intervention programs can diminish or lessen the tasks associated with transitioning ninth grade students to high school. Most of the reforms call for better student orientation programs, collaboration between middle school and high school personnel, and an early warning
system of using data to identify mediocre or at-risk students, as well as better academic preparation for the rigor and complexity of high school instruction (MacIver, 1990; Morgan & Hertzog, 2001; Oates, Flores, & Weishew, 1998).

Unlike their older high school peers, ninth graders represent a unique part of the high school population and have a unique set of needs. For instance, their ability or inability to manage multiple experiences of high school transition and their stage of adolescent development is especially worrisome in considering their record of school success (Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993).

Statement of the Problem

Researchers Williams and Richman (2007) found the failure rate for incoming freshmen students to be a leading predictor of their progress as they move from grade to grade throughout high school. Other researchers’ findings show that ninth graders are faced with anticipation, anxiety, discipline and academic challenges. Subsequently, large proportions of students fail to navigate the transition to high school successfully (Alspaugh, 1998a; Herlihy, 2007; Isakson & Jarvis, 1999). These negative experiences associated with ninth grade transitions are indicators of student academic and behavioral challenges in high school (Figure 1). Thirty percent of entering ninth graders leave school without a regular high school diploma (Sum & Harrington, 2003).
The Triangular Effect Model

The triangular effect model is based on how ninth grade academic achievement, behavior and attendance are interrelated, codependent and contribute to the negative experiences and outcomes, which leads to failure, retention, or high school dropout.

Figure 1. Transition to Ninth Grade and Negative Outcomes

* Negative outcomes are based on the review of related literature on ninth grade transition to high school.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research study is to determine the extent to which incoming ninth grade students, who received instruction in a summer school intervention program, were able to demonstrate successful transition into high school during the fall semester. A successful transition is defined as: a student achieving passing grades for both the A-G core classes and graduation required courses, earning a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or better, receiving no more than one detention with any suspensions, and maintaining a 95% school attendance rate.

There is substantial literature (Alspaugh, 1998b; Kerr, 2002; Wheelock & Miao, 2005) that has documented the problems and negative effects of ninth grade transition to high school. Some researchers (Legter & Kerr, 2001; Williams & Richman, 2007) have recommended student orientation programs such as summer school programs for students at risk. The summer program in this study addresses ninth grade transition and the negative outcomes associated with it and highlighted in the Triangular Effect Model.

There exists little empirical research examining transition from middle to high school for the general education population (Akos & Gallasi, 2004a; Mizelle, 1999). This quantitative research study will compare the effects of high school transition on two groups of general education ninth grade students. One group is an experimental group that will receive treatment by enrolling in a summer school intervention program. The second group is the control group that will not receive treatment. The experimental study will compare data to see if the high school transitions of those groups are the same or different (see Figure 2).
Theoretical Framework

The research will be examined through the theoretical framework of Social and Emotional Learning because it has been identified as the optimal theoretical framework to adapt when working with ninth grade students because interventions that have followed this model have been effective at improving participating students. Researchers (Caprara, Barbanelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 2000) have found Social and Emotional Learning programs and curricula to be effective not only at providing students with important social and emotional skills, but also to be a better predictor of academic success in high school. Schools today are expected to do more than simply address the academics problems of ninth grade students in school; they are also faced with the social and emotional adjustment of these students as well, all of which require considerable time and energy from staff and administration.

The behavior problems associated with ninth grade transition have created the current atmosphere of academic failure and helplessness in many school districts across the country. Researchers (Alspaugh, 1998a; Herlihy, 2007; Isakson & Jarvis, 1999) have identified key areas that influence ninth grade students in their transition year. These areas are: student readiness and expectations for high school, self-motivation, and support systems at school. Through the process of acquiring social and emotional skills students will learn how to manage those key areas that influence their transitional experiences in the first year of high school.

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is defined as “the process through which students learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave
ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors” (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004).

In further examining the issues of ninth grade transition SEL will be used as an intervention and support system to address the variables associated with this dilemma and identified in the review of literature.

The SEL framework focuses on developing students’ competencies in the following areas: self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship management (CASEL, 2003). These competencies are found to influence students’ academic achievement, social outcomes, behavior, attendance, motivation and attitude (Hawkins, Guo, Hill, Battin-Pearson, & Abbott, 2001; Osterman, 2000). In addition to these positive effects of SEL interventions, most of the studies available have being conducted with diverse populations (Norris, 2003).
**Figure 2. Summer School Intervention Model.**

**Summer School Intervention Model**

**Middle School Pre-Data**
- Application Process
- Interview
- Parent agreement
- Academic Progress Review
- Attendance
- Grade Point Average
- Review Discipline Logs
- Counselor Referred
- Student Self-Select
- Student At-Risk of Retention

**Treatment**

**Bridges to Success: Summer School Intervention Program**
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Study Skills
- Organizational Skills
- Character Education
- Life Skills Development
- High School Elective Credits
- Positive Interventions
- CAHSEE English/Language Arts
- CAHSEE Mathematics

*Summer school students will be placed in the Experimental Group 2 in the Fall Term.*

**Assets**
- Early Start on Graduation Requirements
- Social Acculturation to High School
- High School Elective Credits
- Gain Early Experiences on the High Campus before the School Year Begin
- Begin High School on a Positive Note
- Meet Administrators and Other High School Faculty

**2009-2010 School Year**

**High School Fall Term**

**2009-2010 School Year**

**Group 1**

**General Education Classes**
- Control Group

**Group 2**

**General Education Classes**
- Experiment Group

**9th Grade Experimental Study**

**Assessment Data**

**Term 1**
- Academic Progress Data
  - Grade Point Average
  - A-G Requirements
  - Graduation Requirement
- Student Attendance Data
  - Truant
  - Tardy
  - Absences
- Student Discipline Data
  - Detentions
  - On-Campus Suspensions
  - Suspensions
  - Saturday School

**Term 2**
- Academic Progress Data
  - Grade Point Average
  - A-G Requirements
  - Graduation Requirement
- Student Attendance Data
  - Truant
  - Tardy
  - Absences
- Student Discipline Data
  - Detentions
  - On-Campus Suspensions
  - Suspensions
  - Saturday School

*During this time period all of the experiment group students are 8th graders.*

*Terms 1 and 2 equal the fall semester of high school.*
Social and Emotional Learning Framework

According to CASEL, (2002) socially and emotionally competent young people are skilled in five core areas:

1. Self-Awareness – they are self-aware and are able to recognize their emotions, describe their interests and values, and accurately assess their strengths.

2. Self-Management – they are able to manage their emotions and behavior, able to manage stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles.

3. Social-Awareness – they are socially aware and they are able to take the perspective of and empathize with others and recognize and appreciate individual and group similarities and differences.

4. Relationship Management – they have good relationship skills and can establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation. They resist inappropriate social pressure.

5. Responsible Decision Making – they demonstrate responsible decision making at school, at home, and in the community.

SEL Intervention Program

Research clearly supports SEL programming because it improves students’ academic performance, attendance, classroom behavior. These students are also motivated to learn and also less likely to be suspended or otherwise disciplined (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004; CASEL, 2003). The components of an effective SEL intervention program (CASEL, 2003) include:
• Instruction in and opportunities to practice and apply an integrated set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills.

• Learning environments characterized by trust and respectful relationships.

• Implementation that is coordinated and reinforced in classrooms and the school environment.

• Systematic and sequential instruction.

• Developmentally and culturally appropriate behavioral supports.

• Monitoring and evaluation of SEL for continuous improvement.

Research Questions

To carry out the purpose of this study, the following research questions were examined:

1. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to passing A-G courses with a grade of 2.0 or better?

2. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to their cumulative grade point average for courses in the first semester?

3. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the mean number of detentions and suspensions in the first semester?

4. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the number of attendance issues in the first semester?
Definition of Terms

It is important to define the following terms relating to the topic of this study, which will be used throughout this dissertation:

Transition. for the purpose of this study transition is defined as moving from middle school to high school.

Intervention Program. for the purpose of this study an intervention program is a school-based effort to improve students’ overall academic achievement, promote prosocial behavior and enhance problem solving skills.

Bridges to Success Program. is an intervention program designed for incoming ninth grade students with a focus in English/language arts, mathematics, study skills, character education and social and emotional learning. The program was designed to be six hours per day from 8:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. for 14 days (84 hours).

Grade Point Average (GPA). the letter grade “A” equals four points (4.0), and the scale progresses down to zero points (.0) for the letter ”F.” This four-point scale is used to compute each student’s GPA (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000).

Detention. is a form of disciplinary consequence used in school that involves a pupil being detained at certain times in the school day, or after school, (California Education Code, 48900).

On-Campus Suspension (OCS). is an at school disciplinary program to which a student may be assigned for a short period of time in lieu of out-of-school suspension. (Suburban High School Student Handbook, 2007).

Suspension From School. is the removal of a student from school for a violation
of the California Education Code. Home suspension ranges from 1-5 days, but not more than 20 for a school year (California Education Code, 48900).

*Absences*. an absence is not attending school more than one day without a valid excuse (California Education Code, 48260).

*Truancy* – a student is truant who misses more than 30 minutes of instruction without an excuse three times during the school year (California Education Code, 48262).

*Tardy to Class*. a student is tardy who arrives to class after the late bell has rung, but under 30 minutes (Suburban High School Student Handbook, 2007).

*A-G Required Courses* are the University of California and the California State University System course requirements for entering freshmen. The list is comprised of 15 year-long high school courses known as the "a-g" subjects are: (A) History/Social Science, (B) English, (C) Mathematics, (D) Laboratory Science, (E) Language Other than English (F) Visual and Performing Arts (G) College Preparatory Electives (California Department of Education, 2007).

*Graduation Required Courses* are courses students are required to take in order to graduate from high school (California Education Code, 51225.3)
Significance of the Study

This experimental research study will contribute to educational research in the areas of high school transition and intervention. The quantitative findings in this study should expand the current body of knowledge and data about the importance of ninth grade students’ transition to high school. The study will provide valuable information to educators, policy makers, administrators, and school officials in identifying those students prior to their freshman year who are of greatest risk of failing. It also can be used to inform, guide, and inspire high school transition programs to create innovative research-based programs to address the needs of students.

Limitations

The findings from the study are limited to the students in the study and cannot be generalized to any other groups. Students in the experimental group were either recommended by counselors or self-selected into the program. The study did not explore or differentiate students’ admission into the intervention program based on their academic standing. The study addressed the needs of general education students and the assumption in the study is that all incoming ninth graders are at-risk to one or more of the factors outlined in the study regardless of academic standing.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized in five chapters. Chapter 1 provided an introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, theoretical framework, research questions, definition of terms, significance of the study, and limitations. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature pertaining to the ninth grade transition to high school.
The first section begins with a historical perspective of junior high school and middle schools and is then followed by an explanation of the importance of the ninth grade school year. Next is an elaboration of the key factors for student achievement associated with the study. Then there is a discussion on the negative aspects of high school transition, followed by the relevance of race, family and socioeconomic status. The final sections include a discussion on the positive aspects of high school transition; social and emotional learning, intervention programs; transition programs; and the implications for educational leadership.

Chapter 3 consists of quantitative data collected concerning the impact of a summer school intervention program on the transitional process and success in the ninth grade. The staff members were given two surveys to gain information, and the results were tabulated and discussed with the staff as an agenda item at a staff meeting. Interviews were conducted to gain perspectives from an administrator and community members. All information was then compiled and put into the plan, which is presented in this project.

Summary

The research in Chapter One has presented background information, context, and framed and categorized the problems of ninth grade transition to high school. Furthermore, there is compelling evidence that shows there is a tremendous need by educators, policymakers and researchers to address the plethora of systemic problems associated with this phenomenon that include: high course failure, low daily attendance rate, students disciplined for behavior, and lack of motivation. Ninth grade has been
referred to as is the make it or break it year, and for students being on track to graduate or drop out of high school. In Chapter Two, the review of related literature section provides a literary framework and more detailed account of the phenomenon related to ninth grade transition to high school.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This section contains a review of the literature pertaining to the ninth grade transition to high school. The first section begins with a historical perspective of junior high school and middle school and then is followed by an explanation of the importance of the ninth grade school year. Next is an elaboration of the key factors for student achievement associated with the study. Then there is a discussion on the negative aspects of high school transition, followed by the relevance of race, family and socioeconomic status on ninth grade student achievement.

The final sections include a discussion on the positive aspects of high school transition, the student development theory, the applicability of intervention and transition programs, the construct of social and emotional learning, and the implications for educational leadership.

A Historical Perspective of Junior High and Middle Schools

The transition to high school can be difficult for freshmen students because ninth grade is far more complicated eighth grade. In order to fully understand the complexity and extent of the ninth grade problem this section will examine the structure of junior high and middle schools.

Junior high school and middle school both function as the educational bridge between elementary school and high school. The terms are sometimes used interchangeably but between the two there are distinct educational philosophies,
pedagogical goals, grade configurations, management structures, curricula and rationales for existence. The awareness of middle level education began at the beginning of the nineteenth century when public education was becoming compulsory in many states and there were concerns that students would drop out of school after the eighth grade.

*The Junior High School Movement*

The junior high school movement began to emerge in the 1890s when the National Education Association (NEA) appointed the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies, led by the Harvard University President Charles Eliot, to look at reorganizing primary and secondary schooling (Levine, 1978). The 1893 NEA report recommended standardizing high school curricula across the country by designating programs with certain “unit” distributions as prerequisites to college acceptance. The focus was that “Every subject which is taught in all secondary schools should be taught in the same way and to the same extent to every pupil. Thus, for all pupils who study Latin, or history, or algebra, for example, the allotment of time and the method of instruction should be the same” (National Education Association, 1894, p. 17). The standard curriculum was to be provided to all students “regardless of their educational aspirations and that all subjects be held of equal rank for admission to college” (Levine, 1978, p. 159).

The NEA report also recommended reducing elementary schools to six grade levels (1-6) and increasing secondary schools to grades (7-12). Thus, the new secondary schools began to consider grades (7-9) as junior or introductory high school and junior high schools began to appear.
In 1906, as the standardization of the high school curriculum began to take form, the *Carnegie Unit* was introduced. The Carnegie Units became the focus of college entrance requirements and secondary school academics. Courses were calibrated in course units, which were based on contact hour measured. Shedd (2003) describes Carnegie Units (also called Credit Hours) as required seat time of 40-60 minutes per day, five days a week for one school year. Most junior high schools included ninth grade and adopted an organizational structure that supported acquiring Carnegie Units.

On July 6, 1909, the Columbus Board of Education formally approved the creation of junior high schools in Columbus, and the first junior high school was established in Columbus, Ohio (Ohio History Central, 2006). Junior high schools were designed to introduce younger students to the many aspects of high school such as the departmentalized approach to learning, student government and separate classes for each subject. The new curriculum was more substantial, rigorous and differentiated than elementary school.

In the 1920s, as junior high schools gained acceptance, Leonard Koos (1920) and Thomas Briggs (1920) identified important characteristics of this new institution. They generally agreed on a core group of requirements they attributed to a school specifically designed for students ages eleven to fifteen. These requirements for junior high school included: enriching and strengthening the curriculum and instruction by means suitable to the age group. In addition, they recognized and accommodated the special nature of early adolescence, and individual differences in aptitude, interest, and ability. Finally they
sought to staff the schools with teachers specially prepared to work with young adolescents.

Some advocates also believed that the junior high school would encourage students, many of whom at that time would halt their education at the end of the eighth grade, to stay in school for an extra year. Briggs (1920) stated: "In its essence the junior high school is a device of democracy whereby nurture may cooperate with nature to secure the best results possible for each individual adolescent as well as for society at large" (p. 327).

In the 1940s and 1950s the work of Gruhn and Douglass (1947) proposed six major functions that should be included in the structure of junior high schools. They are; integration, exploration, guidance, differentiation, socialization, and articulation. These functions remain today as a foundational framework for defining an effective middle level school.

The Middle School Movement

Junior high schools were the precursor to middle schools and the intent behind the creation of this kind of school was to better meet the developmental needs of young adolescents. Middle schools were uniquely in a school setting separate from K-8 schools, K-5 elementary schools, and high schools. Middle schools were formed by the idea that originated in the psychological studies that were prevalent in the early twentieth century that adolescence is a discrete phase of human development.

Influential psychologist Granville Stanley Hall (1920) expressed that adolescence was a time of rapid, significant changes in virtually every aspect of human development,
including physical, mental, social, emotional, and moral development. He also suggested that schools should recognize and respond to the psychological and social needs of young adolescents in the midst of the "storm and stress," a term coined by Hall.

The first middle school was created in Bay City, Michigan in 1950 (Manning, 2000). The number of middle schools grew quickly during the 1960s and 1970s. William Alexander (1968), a major middle school movement leader, found that most of these new schools displayed "limited progress toward the objectives of the middle school movement" (p. 19).

Middle schools, like junior high schools, offered enriched academics for college-bound students and vocational programs for non-college-bound students. The middle school movement builds on the junior high school core curriculum, as well as the junior high school provision of guidance programs, exploratory education, vocational and home arts. John Lounsbury (1991) also noted that the first comparative studies of the new middle schools and the old junior high schools revealed that the schools "were surprisingly alike in actual practice" (p. 68).

Middle schools continue to focus on the psychological and social needs of young adolescents through such practices as smaller learning teams, advisory classes that help create a bond between each student and at least one teacher, and interdisciplinary teaching and learning (Manning, 2000). According to the National Middle School Association, in the year 2000, there were 8,371 middle schools in the United States with a grade 6-8 configuration, which is the most frequently occurring grade configuration for middle schools, compared to 1,662 in 1971, that is a growth in infrastructure and school
population of over 400% over 30 year span, (Miles & Valentine, 2001). As the middle school population continued to increased, so did the rate for ninth graders entering into high school.

The Importance of the Ninth Grade School Year

Ninth grade is the beginning of student’s high school career and the transition from middle school to high school can be an overwhelming turning point in a student’s social and academic life. During the ninth grade year, students can face tremendous anxiety and struggle with academics. If students have been somewhat disenchanted with school thus far, their experiences in the ninth grade might be a determining factor in whether they graduate from high school (Walsh, 2002).

Many high school teachers have reported incoming freshmen as being unprepared for the rigors of high school subjects. Zyoch (2006) conducted a study in a large school district in the Southwestern United States that focused on 25 years of freshman dropout patterns. He disclosed that 48.4% of the dropouts were attributed to a student’s academic background based on the individual’s retention rate and standardized test scores. Students who had been retained one grade prior to their freshman year had a 50% chance of graduating, whereas those being retained twice had only a 25% chance of graduating from high school (Hertzog & Morgan, 1998).

Fields (2005) described a brainstorm session where representatives from across the country used the following terms to describe freshman-year students:

(a) disorganized, (b) embarrassed easily, (c) emotionally explosive, (d) experimenting, (e) focused on sexuality, (f) impressionable, (g) intimidated, (h)
living for today, (i) looking for direction, (j) media influenced, (k) moldable, (l) peer dependent, (m) seeking independence, (n) self-centered, (o) talkative, and (p) testing the limits (p. 19)

Perhaps these adjectives explain the recent trend in dropouts across the United States.

A critical factor in determining whether or not students have success during their freshman year is whether or not they have experienced a successful transition. Rice (2001) defines transition as a point at which students moved from one segment of the educational process to another. Hertzog and Morgan (1998) found that transitional programs are critical for students’ success and high schools with minimal or no transition programs (i.e. less than two transition practices) reported a ninth-grade retention-failure rate as high as 40%. Schools having an organized transition program lowered their dropout rates. (MacIver, 1990; Morgan & Hertzog, 2001).

Alspaugh’s (1998b) study on school-to-school transition compared 48 school districts on academic performance based on the number of transitions students made from kindergarten to 12th grade. In each case, the study reported that students experienced achievement loss at every transition. The study also identified the main issues of school-to-school transitions as students struggled with identity issues, independence, uncertainty about high school expectations, and a lack of academic preparedness. Hertzog and Morgan’s (1998) study explained:

The transition to high school comes at an inopportune time for teenagers developmentally. They are no longer mentally and physiologically children and their minds and bodies have become awakened to new stimuli. Even their social
status changes drastically upon entering high school. In the spring of students’ eighth-grade year, they have been transformed into the seniors of their school. Their actions, speech, and overall airs are similar to those of their 12th-grade counterparts. These same students, however, attempt to be unseen during the fall of their entry year at the high school. (p. 94)

A 1996 study conducted on eighth grade students in Georgia, Hertzog (1996) argued that the self-perception of students moving from middle schools to high schools and these students participated in a self-perception survey. The results showed students reported a drop in five areas as they moved from the eighth grade to the ninth grade: physical appearance, job competence, romantic appeal, behavioral conduct, and global self-worth. When asked what was most important to them, the only significant finding was an increased focus on developing close friendships. This study confirmed the strong influence that peers have on transitioning freshmen.

Middle schools have often been characterized by constant supervision and excessive rules put in place to maintain order in the school (Manning, 2000). It is not uncommon for teachers to escort entire classes down the hall and to take group restroom breaks. Middle schools, for the most part, have been designed to be student-centered. High schools on the other hand have been more teacher-centered. Entire hallways have been designated for departments of study. Students move freely throughout the school to arrive at their next location with only self-accountability to get them there. For some students, this level of freedom can be overwhelming and can lead to increased discipline problems.
Reents (2002) describes that the greatest difference in the K-12 organizational culture exists in the gap between middle school and high school. He detailed, “Preschool feels like kindergarten; fifth grade feels like sixth grade, the senior year of high school is similar to the college freshman year; but, the 8th grade is middle school and nothing like the 9th grade in high school” (p. 16).

Effective educators must understand and address the unique transition from middle school to high school. Failure to do so could mean a failure to educate many students because the freshman year might be the last chance some students have at being educated.

*Key Factors of Academic Achievement*

Researchers (Barone, Aguirre-Deandreis, & Trickett, 1991; Williams & Richman, 2007) have identified significant factors that influence and contribute to the academic success or failure of ninth grade students in the first year of high school. The factors are students’ academic grades, cumulative grade point average and passing the A-G required classes.

The academic experiences of freshmen students often determine their success throughout high school, and many freshmen students in their first year of high school experience a decline in grades and attendance (Barone, Aguirre-Deandreis, & Trickett, 1991; Williams & Richman, 2007). Research (Alspaugh, 1998a, Alspaugh, 1998b; Isakson & Jarvis, 1999) shows that transitioning students experience a decrease in achievement from middle school to high school. For some high-achieving students this academic failure may represent the first time they experience lower grades, and it can be
an unpleasant experience (Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994). Educators have become cautiously concerned about the academic achievement of ninth graders because school districts across the nation find more students fail ninth grade than any other grade in school (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006).

Students also find that rigor and academic demands increase at the high school level, and they are faced with new rules and raised academic expectations (from teachers and parents). In high school there is an increase in departmentalization and differentiation by academic ability. Teachers use different instructional techniques that require students to have new and more advanced skills (Roderick, 1993). Educators find that many entering ninth grade students have deficient basic skills, particularly in English and mathematics, and these students tend to view themselves more negatively (Hertzog, Morgan, Diamond, & Walker, 1996).

*Grade Point Average*

A common measure of academic achievement in high school is the cumulative grade point average (GPA). Freshmen, who earn a “B” GPA or better have an 80-percent chance of finishing high school with at least a 3.0 GPA. Freshmen with less than a “C-” GPA, are more likely to drop out than graduate (Kemple, Herlihy, & Smith, 2005). The GPA represents the average number of grade points a student earns for each graded high school course (NCES, 2004). The GPA is used to determine student’s academic standing, athletic eligibility, extracurricular activity eligibility and it is important for college admissions and scholarships. Freshmen account for a high volume of “F” grades, which is the lowest measurement used in calculating a GPA, especially in the critical subjects
such as English, math, social science and science (Jerald, 2006). The GPA is one of the most common indicators used as a guide to monitor student academic achievement and its implications are used to determine graduations requirements, scholarship funding and college placement.

A-G Requirements

The A-G are the required high school courses for entrance into the University of California and the California State University Systems, as well some private colleges. Each A-G course is a two-semester (or year-long) course. There are a total of fifteen A-G required courses that students are required to take. The ability of students passing or failing A-G can have an effect on their college eligibility especially concerning minority students. Research finds that when looking at California’s ninth grade students as a whole only 12% of Hispanic and 14% of African American graduates successfully complete the A-G courses and graduate from school.

In a study by Finkelstein and Fong (2008) of California high schools and college-preparatory work, they found that many students in California high schools, especially students from low-performing school with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students, were not on track to complete college preparatory coursework (A-G requirements), that would disqualify them for entrance into the University of California or California State University System. The research found that students, who did not complete college-preparatory mathematics and English in ninth grade were unlikely to make up the classes and would be further behind in college preparatory work. The report advised that intervention in the ninth grade is crucial for these students.
Negative Aspects of High School Transition

The transition from the eighth to ninth grade can be a difficult experience for students, especially when the transition includes moving to a different school and losing the established social support systems of middle school. In ninth grade there are increased curricula and academic demands, and students’ academic outcomes suffer and behavioral problems are exacerbated during the ninth grade. The single most predictive indicator of high school dropout remains the students’ academic standing during the ninth grade (William & Richman, 2007).

The behavior of ninth grade students has adversely affected school climate and generated increased concerns about school safety (Herlihy, 2007). School discipline is essential to the regulation of student’s behavior and the maintenance of order in schools. Without behavior expectations, conformity and consequences that are enforced, students would be out of control and there would be chaos in schools. Transitioning freshmen tend to be problematic, and it has been suggested that it is due to differences in the organizational structures. Students move from a structured middle school system in which there is strict accountability for behavior, conformity of rules, and teacher monitoring; whereas, high schools are almost the exact opposite, and teachers expect student to self-monitor their behavior. The inherent expectation of high school places some transitioning students at risk for discipline referrals, suspensions and other disciplinary action.
Discipline Referrals

Disciplinary referrals, also known as “behavior referrals”, are probably the most common means that teachers use in communicating and dealing with student behavior problems. In a study by Skiba, Peterson and Williams (1997) the authors found as many as 40% of all students receive some type of documented discipline intervention within one school year. The majority of those discipline referrals are made for noncompliance, defiance or disrespect. The disciplinary referral system often follows a typical sequence: a student’s problem behavior is observed and usually reported to a school administrator, then a consequence is delivered (reprimand, detention, suspension, or parent conference), and the incident is documented for the school as part of the student’s discipline record. A survey of administrators by Costenbader and Markson, (1994) as cited in Skiba, Peterson and Williams, (1997) shows the offense most likely to result in suspension is aggression.

Suspensions

One of the many strategies that is used for stopping and preventing student misbehavior and problems at school is suspension. Suspension is “the removal of a student from the school environment” (Mendez, Knoff & Ferron, 2002 p. 259). Out-of-school suspension is considered one of the most severe disciplinary consequences available to schools. Usually, fights or physical aggression among students are found to be among the most common reasons for suspension from school (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Dupper & Bosch, 1996; Imich, 1994; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997).
Traditionally out-of-school suspension has been a disciplinary measure for serious infractions as outlined in the California Education Code (CEC, 2009). The most common serious infractions are physical violence, alcohol and drug possession, and possession of weapons. However, school suspension is also commonly used for a number of relatively minor offenses, such as disobedience, defiance and disrespect (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997) truancy and attendance problems (Kaeser, 1979; Morgan D’Atrio et al., 1996) and general classroom disruption or off task behavior (Imich, 1994). There has been much controversy surrounding this issue and studies have shown that suspension is often misapplied, unfairly used against minorities, and ineffective at producing better future behavior (Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano, & Hawkins, 2000; Furstenberg, Nield, & Stoner-Eby, 2003; Rumberger, 1995)

Suspension from school is administered as a result of a violation of an education code in which suspension is applied. Most suspensions occur due to a student severely disrupting the learning environment and only the removal of the offending student can allow learning to continue (CEC, 2009).

School suspensions are highly controversial and in one Midwestern city, one third of all referrals to the administrative office resulted in a one to five day suspension, and 21% of all enrolled students were suspended at least once during the school year (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). Suspension appears to be used with greater frequency in urban areas than in suburban or rural areas (Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 1986; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982).
Gottfredson (1989) reported that students viewed most disciplinary problems as resulting from rules that were unjust or unfairly applied. In particular, students who are already at-risk for disruption may see confrontational discipline as a challenge to escalate their behavior. However, studies of school suspension have consistently documented over-representation of low-income students in the use of that consequence (Brantlinger, 1991; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Wu et al., 1982). The most common consequence of student misbehavior is suspension, and despite the calls for alternatives to suspension, it is among the most widely used disciplinary techniques (Bowditch, 1993 and Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). Brantlinger (1991) reported that both high-and low-income adolescents felt that disciplinary practices were unfairly weighted against poor students.

**Attendance**

Absences and low attendance are other indicators for ninth graders dropping out and course attendance is eight times more predictive of ninth grade failure than eighth grade test scores. Kemple, Herlihy and Smith (2005) find that students with very low eighth grade test scores who miss one week of class are less likely to fail than students with very high test scores who miss just one additional week of class. School attendance is tantamount to the success of ninth grade students; whereas, nearly ninety-percent of freshmen who miss less than a week of school per semester graduate, and fifty percent of these students complete their freshman year with a “B” average or better.

In a 2003 National Survey of Adolescents in the United States the researchers found that truancy is a serious concern that affects most of the school districts in the
Truancy is defined as an unexcused absence, not attending, or showing up late for class and not having a valid reason as defined by the school (American Heritage Dictionary, 2009). The U.S. Department of Education (1996) found that truancy is a predictor for dropping out of school, engaging in substance abuse, earning poor grades, and being involved in illegal activities, daytime crime, and violence. Moreover, Rumberger (2001) finds that students who are continually absent from school and fall into truant status are more likely to be at-risk of dropping out. According to Garry, (1996) the U.S. Department of Justice statistics indicated that in some cities the daily absentee rates have reached as high as 30 percent.

A research study conducted by Wendy Schwartz analyzed data from surveys taken over a four-year span. Schwartz (1995) found that almost one half of all students surveyed missed at least 10 days of school; one third cut class at least 10 times; and one fourth were late at least 10 times. It is evident that when students are habitually truant from school, they fall so far behind in their class work and that dropping out is an easier option than catching up.

Freshmen often develop attendance and tardiness problems, which can start with students leisurely moving between classes to connect with other students and fit in the larger school environment. Tardiness is a serious problem in high school and excessive absences as part of twenty-one criteria which predict the likelihood of dropping out of school. Baker, Sigmon and Nugent (2001) found that tardiness and absences are characteristics of potential ninth and tenth grade at-risk students and that excessive absences and tardiness constituted the third most common reason for student failure in
school. Low attendance and habitual tardiness were among the common characteristics of low-achieving Hispanic high school students (Cuellar, 1992); whereas, a study by Estcourt (1986) found that low achievement correlated with chronic absenteeism in high school students. Ediger (1987) included “cutting classes and frequent tardiness in school” among the indicators of at-risk students with drug and alcohol abuse problems (p. 3).

**Dropout Rate**

Research finds that ninth grade is the “make it or break it year” for being on track to graduate or drop out of school (Allensworth & Easton, 2007; Herlihy, 2007; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007). The transition to high school phenomenon has received increased attention due to the fact that ninth grade course failures and high school dropout rates exceed all other grade levels (Hertzog & Morgan, 1998; Roderick & Camburn, 1999).

Nationally, almost seven thousand students become dropouts. Annually, that adds up to about 1.2 million students who will not graduate from high school with their peers as scheduled (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). In 2007, only about 58 percent of Hispanic students and 53 percent of black students will graduate on time with a regular diploma, compared to 80 percent of Asian students and 76 percent of white students (EPE, 2007).

In a recent study, 45 percent of dropouts reported that they entered high school unprepared for rigorous studies, and many students dropout, often shortly after they enter high school, or when they fall behind and do not expect to graduate on time (Bridgeland, DiIulio & Morison, 2006). The high school dropout rate has shifted from the last 2 years of high school, which was typical three decades ago, to between the 9th and 10th grades
due to an increasing number of ninth graders having failed to be promoted to the 10th grade (Belfanze & Legters, 2004).

The dropout rate remains a serious problem for California. In the 2006-2007 school year, 67.6 percent of public school students in California graduated, and the adjusted four-year derived dropout rate is 24.2 percent (CDE, 2008). In addressing this alarming problem studies suggest that intervention services such as tutoring, mentoring, ninth grade academies, and small learning communities programs have raised retention and graduation rates as well as would caused a decline in ninth grade dropout rates (Williams & Richman, 2007).

**Race, Family and Socioeconomics Status**

A study by the Harvard University’s Civil Rights Project in 2003 revealed that there were nine predictors that students who fail ninth-grade and high school dropouts have in common. They are: 1) older than age-appropriate students, 2) minority students, 3) children in single-family homes, 4) history of in-school behavior problems, 5) infrequent attendance, 6) low grades, 7) low test scores, 8) repeated a grade, and 9) parents have relatively little education. Two other relating factors are limited family resources and lack of teachers’ experience (Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano, & Hawkins, 2000; Furstenberg, Nield, & Stoner-Eby, 2003; Rumberger, 1995). This section will examine three of the nine predictors that have the most affect on ninth grade transition to high school: race, family and socioeconomics.
Race

The element of race is a significant factor in analyzing how the transition to high school affects ninth grade minority students across the United States. Race is a key characteristic when accessing the academic achievement of minority students in public schools because it implies culture, language and customs. Most large public high schools organize instruction around curricular tracks that sort students into different groups, which are often associated more with students’ social class and ethnicity than with differences in talents and interests (Lee & Bryk, 1989).

Jeannie Oakes (1985) in her work “Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality,” found that the curriculum content, instruction quality, and classroom climate varied substantially between different tracks. Students in the higher tracks learned skills related to critical thinking, problem solving and creative writing, and mastered the vocabulary that would raise their scores. Students in the lower tracks focused on rote learning and memorization: they were taught mostly through workbooks and kits, completed worksheets on language usage, and practiced filling out applications for jobs. Moreover, teachers in high streams devoted more class time to learning, were more enthusiastic and had higher expectations of students than teachers in the lower tracks. The data was conclusive: students in higher tracks had better classroom opportunities.

The United States Census Bureau projects that by the year 2050, about 50 percent of the U.S. population will be African American, Hispanic, or Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004; 2008). African American and Hispanic high school students are conspicuously falling behind their white counterparts in graduation rates, dropout rates,
literacy rates, and college preparedness rates. African American and Hispanic twelfth-grade students read at approximately the same level as white eighth grader students (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

A 2001 study of high school graduation found that only 50% of African American students, 51% of Native American students, and 53% of all Hispanic students graduated from high school. The male African American, Native American, and Hispanic students fare much worse: at 43%, 47%, and 48% respectively (Orfield, Losen, Wald & Swanson, 2004). The alarming lack of achievement of students of color in public schools should concern all Americans. The achievement problems begin early in the minority student’s educational career. Research finds that nearly one of every three eight-grade students in the United States does not graduate from high school, and half of African American and Hispanic students do not make it to graduation day (Orfield, 2004). In addition, the transition may be more difficult for Hispanic students, especially if they are English language learners, and for students with disabilities (Askos & Galassi, 2004a).

Research shows that African American students experience greater disparities in other important areas of education in which they are overrepresented in special education and disciplinary action. They are underrepresented in honors, advance placement and college preparatory education classes. In 2004, 13 percent of African American students aged six to twenty-one received Special Education Services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, compared to 9 percent of the total student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). In 1999, 35 percent of African American students in grades seven through twelve had been suspended or expelled during their school years,
compared to 13 percent of Asians and 15 percent of whites (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Of students who graduated with the Class of 2007, African Americans scored lower than all other racial and ethnic groups on all three parts of the SAT (College Board, 2007).

African American males are especially at-risk and impacted by race. Research finds that that 88 percent of African American eighth graders read below grade level, compared to 62 percent of white eighth graders, and the twelfth-grade reading scores of African American males were significantly lower than those for men and women across every other racial and ethnic group (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). In 2005, the on-time graduation rate for African American males was 48 percent nationally; for white males it was 74 percent (Green & Winters, 2006).

In 2005, only 55 percent of all African American students graduated from high school on time with a high school diploma, compared to 78 percent of whites (Green & Winters, 2006). Nearly half of the nation’s African American students, but only 11 percent of white students, attend high schools in which graduation is not the norm (Balfanz & Legters, 2004). In 2002, 23 percent of all African American students who started public high school left it prepared for college, compared to 40 percent of whites (Greene & Winters, 2005).

*Family*

Parents’ educational level and income are strong predictors of children’s educational attainment. College-educated parents help to keep their children on an academic schedule for taking appropriate advance placement, graduation and a-g courses
Parents with college degrees may be better able to provide college planning information and resources than parents with less education, because college educated parents have experienced college themselves.

Brough and Irvin (2001) state that there is a range of parental involvement that includes supervising the adolescent’s health and safety concerns, establishing an environment that supports school learning, being involved in school activities, and monitoring school work at home. No one method will work for all parents and students, since parental involvement is also affected by family income level, ethnicity, culture, language, perceived parental roles, and self-efficacy (Brough & Irvin, 2001). Schools should continuously apprise parents of concrete ways that they can foster student academic improvement. In building partnerships with those parents who lack educational planning information, they must rely primarily on the school (and to some extent on the community) to provide the resources necessary for educational exploration, planning, and decision making.

**Socioeconomics**

Researchers continue to study the effects of low socioeconomic status and poverty on student achievement and find that it is a significant deterrent to academic success. A high-poverty, majority-minority high school is five times more likely to have weak promoting power (or promoting 50% or fewer freshmen to senior status within four years) than a majority white school (Balfanz & Legters, 2004). In America there is a disproportionate number of failing schools, across grade levels that are predominantly comprised of poor, racial, and ethnic minority students and lack basic reading skills.
Research finds that half of poor, urban ninth graders read at only a fifth or sixth grade level (Laird, Debell, & Chapman, 2006; Neild & Balfanz, 2001). These failing segregated schools tend to have fewer financial, human, and material resources than schools in more affluent areas (Fabiano, Pearson & Williams, 2005). Jonathan Kozol (2005) describes what he calls educational apartheid in the public schools system. He finds that American public schools are now 12 years into the process of continuous resegregation. The desegregation of black students, which increased continuously from the 1950s to the late 1980s, has receded to levels not seen in three decades. The proportion of black students in majority-white schools stands at "a level lower than in any year since 1968.

Kozol (2005) examined the increasing separation between the children of the privileged and the children of minorities. For years, the better school districts have been more accessible to knowledgeable, "savvy" parents who knows the "ins" and "outs" of how to navigate the school system to their advantage and poor minority parents do not. He states that these people "fail to see...that the two systems are inextricably linked; each exists, in part, because of the other" (p. 141).

Unfortunately, by the time students who attend these [segregated and underperforming] schools reach high school, the academic challenges they face have been compounded by years of substandard education (Alexander, Entwisle & Kabbani, 2000; Kaufman & Bradby, 1992).

The study by Patterson, Beltyukova, Berman, and Francis (2007) found the rate of student loss during the freshman year is more than 40 percent in high-poverty areas compared to 27 percent in low-poverty setting. Kaufman, Alt, and Chapman (2001)
reported that more than five percent of all high school students drop out of school each year and certain groups of students, such as low socioeconomic students, have dropout numbers that rise close to 10 percent. Kaufman, *et al.* (1992) also report that if this trend continues, one of every seven students entering high school will not graduate.

In the forty-nine states studied, the school districts with the highest minority enrollments receive an average of $877 less per student than school districts with the lowest number of minorities enrolled (Arroyo, 2008). In high schools where at least 75 percent of the students are low-income, there are three times as many uncertified or out-of-field teachers teaching both English and science than in schools with wealthier populations (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

More than 60 percent of African American students attend schools where more than 50 percent of the school population is identified as living in poverty, compared to 18 percent of white students (Orfield & Lee, 2005). Planty & Devoe (2005) found that African American students were more likely than white students to attend schools where trash was present on the floor (29 percent vs. 18 percent), graffiti was present (10 percent vs. 3 percent), and ceilings were in disrepair (12 percent vs. 7 percent).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, African American students made up 16 percent of the public school population in 2004 and these students are disproportionately concentrated in high-poverty, low-performing schools and are vulnerable to poor educational outcomes that undermine their chances for success in life (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).
Hall (2007) found 26 states that report on low-income students, the graduation rate was seven percentage points below the overall average. Each high school dropout costs a state between $3,000 and $5,000 per year. Costs to these individuals who drop out are equally detrimental in terms of earning, career advancement and social status. About 1.3 million students did not graduate from United States high schools in 2004, costing more than $325 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).

Positive Aspects of High School Transition

Not all of the experiences associated with ninth grade transition are negative. Many young adolescents entering high school look forward to having more choices and making new friends. In a study of middle grades students, researchers identified academic ability as especially important to making it in secondary school. After entering high school, students in the study added time management, ability to stay on task, social skills, and behavior as essential elements in success (Zeedyk, Gallacher, Henderson, Hope, Husband, & Lindsay, 2003). Complicating transition programs is that not all ninth graders experience the transition to high school the same way. Weiss and Bearman (2007) reported that high schools provided a “fresh start” for students who may have been ostracized during middle school. These students tended not to suffer the loss of support that other transitioning students reported as a concern.
Student Development Theory

William Perry (1970) views transitions as a cognitive process, and his scheme of intellectual and cognitive development provides a construct of the cognitive process that students go through. Perry’s theory (1970; 1981) explains how students make sense of what they hear and experience in the classroom. He proposes that students pass through a predictable sequence of stages or positions of transition and growth. According to Perry (1970) the transition and growth continuum begins with a simplistic, categorical view of the world. It moves on to a realization of relative values, and the formation and affirmation of one's own commitments.

The nine positions (stages) of intellectual and cognitive development can be grouped into four major periods (Perry, 1981) which are: Dualism (positions 1 and 2), Multiplicity (positions 3 and 4), Relativism (positions 5, and 6), and Commitment in Relativism (Positions 7, 8, and 9). These positions serve as filters through which students see their world, in both their in academic setting and in their personal experiences. Similarly, Williams and Richman (2007) have identified that it is the academic and personal experiences of ninth graders that contribute to their failure in the first year of high school.

In his Student Development Theory (1970) Perry proposes that the nine positions are relevant to the development of transitioning students because they offer insight to understand their intellectual and ethical development and their general attitude towards knowledge. Hofer and Pintrich (1997) found Perry’s student development model ideal for understanding how students acquire the theories and beliefs they hold about learning, and
its influence on the cognitive processes of thinking and reasoning. Some of the basic assumptions guiding student development are:

1. The individual student must be considered as a whole.
2. Each student is a unique person and must be treated as such.
3. The total environment of the student is educational and must be used to help the student achieve full development.
4. The major responsibility for a student's personal and social development rests with the student and his/her personal resources.

Perry (1970) also addresses issues that are very different from those commonly associated with “critical thinking.” Critical thinking can be understood as the ability to consider or weigh evidence, examine arguments, and construct rational bases for beliefs. It also includes self-examination of the reasoning processes (i.e., metacognition) to evaluate their appropriateness and effectiveness (Bruning, 1994). However, Perry’s scheme (1970) speaks to epistemic issues underlying critical thinking. It examines students’ assumptions concerning the nature and acquisition of knowledge (or truth). The scheme considers the position in which a student views his world, or point of view. The student's identity does not change but his cognitive structures go through a series of constructions and reconstructions along the continuum of student development. As new evidence is found, students gain a deeper understanding concerning who one is and how the world grows.
Intervention Programs

Many students across American are at risk of not achieving academic success due to social, emotional, and behavioral problems affecting school performance. On the contrary, educators can intervene and make a positive difference in a students' educational experience that can be accomplished by helping them feel as though they belong (Sanders & Sanders, 1998). Intervention is defined as school-based efforts to improve clients’ lives and change problems (Murphy & Duncan, 1997). Intervention helps students best through early identification, prevention, instruction, counseling and support. They also support parents, assist educators and work with administrators by providing resources and programs to enhance the social and emotional needs of students.

Intervention programs related to high school transition vary considerably. School districts have given serious thought and consideration in finding appropriate interventions programs to address ninth grade academic, behavioral, and attendance issues. Williams and Richman (2007) find that high schools can minimize the impact of the transition process on ninth grade students by focusing on the potential causes that contribute to the decline in academic, behavioral, attendance and social outcomes. While other researchers (Legters & Kerr, 2001) contend that schools who provide high risk students with intervention services find that they are better able to help students improve the transition from middle to high school.

In recent years there has been a national consensus calling for schools to offer more than academic instruction to foster success because many ninth graders are challenged with issues of academic failure, peer pressure and making adjustments that are
part of the adolescence. These challenges greatly interfere with their success in school, at home and in life in general, putting the population as a whole in crisis. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2005) found that large numbers of adolescents are dealing with significant barriers that interfere with their daily routine at school. These adolescents are at increased risk to “fall between the cracks” and face certain academic failure due to difficulties in managing the transition (Greenberg, Domotrovich, & Bamberger, 2001; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). To manage student tensions and high risk tendencies schools can teach skills that develop their social and emotional competencies. When students learn social interaction skills it has been an effective method of reducing negative social interactions (CASEL, 2002).

Studies by Blum, McNeely and Rinehart (2002) and Osterman (2000) on schools that provide interventions to address students’ behavioral and social needs found that students are more engaged in school and are more receptive to learning and both factors are strongly linked to academic success.

**Social and Emotional Learning**

School districts and schools have found that social and emotional learning (SEL) intervention programs teach students stress management, resiliency and coping skills to better deal with risk factors associated with transitioning students. SEL addresses the underlying causes of problem behaviors, while supporting academic achievement (Greenberg, Weissberg, O’Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik, & Elias, 2003). SEL programs build young people’s skills to recognize and manage their emotions, to appreciate the perspectives of others, establish positive goals, make responsible decisions, and handle
interpersonal situations effectively (CASEL, 2003; Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). SEL intervention programs also strengthens student’s connection to school through fostering a caring environment, providing an interesting and engaging classroom, and through schoolwide practice of pro-social interaction skills (McNeeley, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Osterman, 2000), (Figure 3).

SEL programs have direct as well as indirect impacts on student learning and school success. SEL school-based programs usually include components of the five competency skills: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision making. The competencies are taught through sequential and developmentally appropriate instruction in the five major areas of social and emotional competence.

Few SEL programs accomplish and implement all of the competencies, Instead schools typically combine programs with strengths in one competency or another in order to achieve the full benefit of SEL programming. For example, schools would implement character education, conflict resolution, life skills, cooperative learning, mentoring, and many more. Berber and Olsen (2004) found that Ninth grade students indicated that more transitional support would have eased their transition to high school compared to their perceptions. Students also perceived less support and monitoring from teachers and principals and they generally like school less than they did in middle school. On average, ninth graders reported being less involved in school activities and perceive the need for more school organization. They also indicate lower self-esteem and higher rates of depression than middle school students.
Studies find that students who receive social-emotional support and prevention services achieve better academically in school (Greenberg, Weissberg, O’Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik, & Elias, 2003; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). Students that are social and emotionally component are in a much better position to make the transition successfully.

Figure 3: How Evidence-Based SEL Programs Work.
Transition Programs

Many educators, policymakers, and researchers struggle to find solutions to mitigate the persistent academic failures rate associated with ninth grade transition. Schiller (1999) defines academic transition as a process during which institutional and social factors influence which students educational careers are positively or negatively affected by this [transition] movement between organizations. According to MacIver (1990) when middle school students took part in a high school transition program that provided a variety of choices, such as orientation to the next school, social support, peer interaction, and curriculum information as well as academic support to choose from, and a lower student retention rate in the transition grade. School districts that provided some kind of transition programs have seen lower dropout rates than districts without such programs, and school administrators expect fewer students to dropout before graduation. (MacIver & Epstein, 1991; Morgan & Hertzog, 2001).

It is certainly important when middle and high schools provide young adolescents with activities that relate directly to their transition into high school; however, providing young adolescents with a challenging and supportive middle school experience is an equally important factor in their making a successful transition into high school (Belcher & Hatley, 1994; Mizelle, 1995; Oates, Flores, & Weishew, 1998). Therefore, a better understanding of the construct of transition is needed between the middle schools and high schools. Well structured transition programs can address the information gap by providing students and families with a wealth of information concerning the similarities
or academic, social, and organizational differences between middle and high schools (Mizelle, 1999).

Ninth grade adolescent development comes at a time when friendships and social interaction are particularly important for young adolescents; the normative transition into high school often can disrupt friendship networks (established in middle school) and, thereby, interfere with students’ success in high school (Baron, Aguirre-Deandreis, & Tricket, 1991). Ninth grade students experience an increased need for friendships and it is vital for transition programs to include activities offering incoming students social support, as well as activities that provides the opportunity to get to know and develop positive relationships with older students and other incoming students (Hertzog, Morgan, Diamond, & Walker, 1996; 1996; MacIver, 1990). The importance of parents being involved with adolescent students’ transitions from middle to high school can not be overestimated.

Research studies on high school reform suggest that school systems must support first-year high school students to improve their chances of success in the pivotal first year of high school. Twenty-nine out of fifty-one states see their greatest “leakage” in the “education pipeline” occurs during the ninth grade year (EPE, 2006). The transition problem is far more pronounced in large urban cities, high minority, and high poverty areas, where nearly half of the Black and Latino ninth grade transitioning students do not make it to graduation day (Orfield, 2004). In the past decade there has emerged a variety of transition to high school programs that vary in one form or another. These programs suggest three distinct approaches to deal with the problem: a) whole school reform, b)
creation of separate ninth grade academies, and c) summer school transitional programs. The most prevalent transition to high school programs found in the research, are: The Freshman Transition Initiative Program, Talent Development High School and Summer Remediation Programs.

*The Freshman Transition Initiative Program*

The Freshman Transition Initiative Program is a classroom-based student advisory intervention program developed by George Washington University. The design of the program is based on career exploration and self-accountability model. The Freshman Transition Initiative Program is predicated on preventing student from dropping out of high school early. The program has developed a career and academic curriculum that includes freshmen course standards and transition classes. A key concept of the freshmen transition classes is that students develop of a 10-year plan. The plan’s timeline spans from high school, on to postsecondary education or training, and on to the workforce. The comprehensive 10-year plan is a cornerstone of the program and it is integrated with a math and literary curriculum. The 10-year plan provides a framework for students to become engaged in academics that is connected to tangible and practical career goals. A study by Dedmond, Bround, and LaFauci (2006) found that students who felt competent were more likely to engage in career planning and decision making. Ideally, transition programs should provide access to specific interventions that relate directly to the issues that adolescents have regarding self-identity, motivation, and competence. Dedmond *et al.* (2006) also emphasizes that it is imperative for schools to build a supportive climate and foster a sense of community to address issues of student
disconnect and isolation. Therefore, schools should include long-term and comprehensive programs rather than relying on short, ineffective programs. The program integrates learning across the curricula to provide connections between academics and future careers. The Freshmen Transition Program approach creates a supportive environment for its students and can be implemented as a stand alone program at a single school or part of a district effort. There are other high school transition models that are structured differently in their approach to solving the puzzle of ninth grade transition to high school.

*Talent Development High Schools*

In cities across the United States large numbers of students drop out of low-performing high schools, those students that remain in these schools typically do not succeed academically. Repeatedly efforts to make substantial reforms to these schools are met with little success. The educational reform movement has proposed different alternatives to solve the dilemma of reforming high school into productive institution of higher learning.

The Talent Development High School model is a comprehensive school reform initiative that has been developed to address these challenges. Talent Development was created in 1994 by the Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR). The Talent Development model focuses on specific changes to a school's organizational structure, student support services, and school management in order to facilitate a strong positive climate for learning. Talent Development is especially designed for struggling low-performing schools and provides a strategic approach in programming to help close the academic achievement gap. Talent
Development begins with freshmen students through the creation of ninth grade academies. In this model the ninth grade academies are exclusive and are housed in a separate section, and apart from the rest of the high school, or in a stand-alone building to support learning and adolescent development (Reents, 2002). The physical separation of ninth grade from the upper grades is strategic and by design so that learning take place in a controlled environment.

Talent Development provides three unique features to address learning for ninth graders which include: Establishing a ninth grade academy, offering a freshman seminar course and developing the practice of professional learning communities. Each of the three features are unique and an interrelated components to develop competent, self-learning and supported ninth graders.

The Ninth Grade Academy is a transition module built on a larger concept of schoolwide reform. The basic idea was to design a separate facility that physically separated ninth graders and develop their capacity as high school students. In Talent Development schools ninth grade students are enrolled in the academy with a team of interdisciplinary teachers upon entering high school. The academy provides a core curriculum designed to assist low performing and at-risk students with extended periods of reading and math to improve their basic skills. Research supporting the ninth grade academy found students have shown marked improvement in attendance, standardized test scores, course grades, and suspension rates (Kemple & Herlihy, 2004).

The Freshman Seminar is a first-semester ninth-grade course that lays the academic foundation for students through teaching study skills, time management, note-
taking, goal setting and how to manage peer relations. It is an orientation course that all
ninth-graders have to take the required freshman seminar course that provides students
with organizational structure and a curriculum of life skills that is developmentally
appropriate. Research shows that the first semester of high school is crucial for ninth
grade achievement (Legter & Kerr, 2001). The freshmen seminar provides at-risk
students with the tools to strengthen their academic skills and an opportunity to make up
lost academic ground. The Talent Development course teaches students how to learn and
how to handle the challenges of dealing with other students in a high school environment
(Akos & Galassi, 2004b).

A study by Kemple and Herlihy (2004) found the following gains by school
districts with Talent Development Schools: (a) student attendance rates improved by 15
percent and the number of students with 90 percent or better attendance has doubled, (b)
the number of students reaching 11th grade doubled in the first two schools to adopt the
Talent Development model, (c) overall, suspensions and arrests were significantly lower
in each Talent Development School, and (d) ninth-grade achievement in reading and
math is improving. In one year, over half of the ninth-graders gained one full year in
math, and many gained two years. In reading, one out of five students improved by two
years.

An assessment of the Talent Development strategy by Kemple, Herlihy and Smith
(2005) found that the Talent Development model has five main features: 1) a separate
physical setting in which the needs of the incoming freshman class can be met in a
distraction-free, concentrated way; 2) a team-teaching structure designed to divide the
class into smaller, more intimate groups, identify specific students needing assistance, and provide that assistance effectively; 3) supports and incentives for students to attend school regularly and achieve academically; 4) a curricular regimen, built upon the extended block schedule, which was designed to help students overcome skill and knowledge deficiencies; 5) the Twilight Academy, a specialized program for ninth graders who failed, or experienced difficulty, in the normal school setting; and 6) ongoing coaching and professional development for teachers that is curriculum-specific and focuses on modeling lessons, strategies for learning, and classroom management.

The Talent Development program restructures the schoolwide system for student success which is an expensive, exhaustive and comprehensive undertaking by a school district. Other less intensive reform measures and intervention programs that require less funding are summer school. The summer intervention programs are shorter in duration and have had varying degrees of success as well.

**Summer Intervention Programs**

Summer intervention programs are very common because they are less costly than whole school reform. Summer school is also shorter in duration, smaller in size, and is flexible to address varying populations. The Summer Bridge model is an often used strategy that provides intervention and remediation to students. Summer intervention programs mostly provide academic remediation for at-risk students, credit recovery classes and students completing high school credits toward graduation. Velasquez (2002) and Abdulmalik (2008) find there have been positive outcomes resulting from Summer Bridges intervention programs. Programs that are designed to assist eighth graders in
obtaining academic and readiness skills needed to achieve success in the ninth grade. The Summer Bridges Program was found to be effective in the short run across demographic and achievement groups in producing test score gains, as students increased their test scores during the regular school year (Roderick, Engel, & Nagoya, 2003).

Bunting (2004) believes that transition activities should continue throughout at least the first quarter of ninth grade. Furthermore, the summer school programs should collaborate with middle schools to offer transition programs that are appropriate for the incoming ninth graders. This can involve opportunities for eighth and ninth-graders to interact with each other, and for older students to mentor and support the younger ones in various capacities. Transition and articulation between institutions would allow the middle and high school teachers to collaborate on successful transitions by discussing curriculum requirements, academic readiness and affective preparation for high school (Abdulmalik, 2008; Mizelle & Irvin, 2000).

Assessments

Assessment and the overall evaluation of the effectiveness of high school transition and intervention programs is an important tool for program reform or improvement. It is especially significant in the areas of curriculum, pedagogy and instruction. These are the vehicles used for meeting their interventions’ objectives and are crucial for student success. As explained, the most powerful predictors of whether a student will complete high school include course performance and attendance during the first year of high school (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; 2007).
Assessments should include a systematic collection of student data that can be used to develop an effective early warning system for ninth grade students. The Consortium on Chicago School Research has developed a system of monitoring students’ progress over time. The “on-track indicator” developed in 2005 by combining two highly predictive ninth-grade risk factors: course credits earned and course grades. The on-track indicator is used to determine that first-year high school students in the Chicago Public Schools are classified as being “on track” if they earn (a) at least five full-year course credits and (b) no more than an “F” grade in one semester for a core course in their freshmen year. The findings were that on-track students are more than three and a half times more likely than students who are off track to graduate from high school in 4 years (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). An assessment tool such as the on-track indicator is a more accurate predictor of graduation than students’ middle school achievement test scores or their background characteristics.

Implications for Educational Leadership

The overall success and academic achievement of ninth grade students have profound implications for educational leaders, policymakers, and teachers. Presently, educational leadership is challenged with a nation of students at-risk of under achievement. The persistent rate of low achievement data continues to be alarming as to the disproportionate amounts of students that fail ninth grade. The findings are especially for students of color as many of these under achieving students do not graduate high school (Haney & Morgan, 2004; Kemple, Herlihy & Smith, 2005).
It is imperative that educational leaders continue to work collaboratively to make realistic and sustainable improvements by addressing the ninth grade achievement problem through multiple pathways and school restructuring (Lee, Bryk & Smith, 1993). It is essential that educators continue to make improvements in orientation and transition programs that will provide interventions to reduce the stress of ninth grade transition to high school. Actually, there is justification to provide intervention programs as foundational requirements for school districts, especially inner city, high minority and poverty schools.

Many ninth graders are simply not engaged at school, and a compelling reason is that ninth graders are dropping out of high school is not a sudden act, but a gradual process of disengagement (Bridgeland, DiTulio & Morris, 2006). A major reason for this disengagement is a lack of clear connections between high school course work and students’ personal goals (CASEL, 2002). Reform interventions have to make connections between school and students personal and family lives. Hertzog & Morgan (1999) found that students who participate in transition intervention programs that actively involve students they are less likely to dropout of high school even demographic and other information is held constant.

It is crucial that educational leaders find solutions and alternatives to address the problem of ninth grade learning and should seriously begin to examine the implication of Social and Emotional Learning (Greenberg, Domotrovich, & Bamberger, 2001; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). Research studies found that in various school districts across the country, there is an assortment of non-cognitive factors that impact the
academic achievement and behaviors of students. When students learn social and emotional competency skills there is improvement in their behavior and academic performance (CASEL, 2002).

The centerpiece of SEL is decision-making and problem-solving. These two skills drive at the heart of the problem of ninth grade transition to high school. These skills link to character development and encourage students to focus and motivate (CASEL, 2005).

In order for the reform efforts to make systemic and sustained changes in response to the abysmal behavior problems, chronic academic failure, and persistently low attendance rates—all of which severely impact the academic standing, fiscal budget and staff morale of a school—educational leaders must make transformative changes in the public school system regarding the following: how do they frame the present problems of ninth grade transition and what has been done? The transitional period of change for adolescent is so profound, and the evidence is clear that young people at-risk are in dire need of support.

Educational leaders can approach the transition to high school dilemma using a multifaceted approach through integrating the SEL competencies into the transition activities by way of intervention programs, reforms and curriculum. Where by the SEL process can produce emotionally intelligent young people on that are able to navigate through the maze of academic, social, behavioral, emotional encounter that produce one of the most stressful periods of change affecting their lives.
Literature Review Summary

The review of related literature on the subject of ninth grade transition to high school and has found many factors that contribute to the appalling academic failure. The literature has also provided a framework of negative experiences based on one, or more of these negative factors not being addressed. The literature also indicates that African American and Hispanic students tend to be concentrated in urban schools, which often have a higher poverty rate than rural or suburban schools, and their postsecondary degree attainment rates lag behind their rural and suburban peers (Green & Winter, 2006; Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Orfield, 2004).
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Ninth grade transition to high school marks a critical juncture in American schooling. Students who can manage the academic demands of the transition to high school have a high probability of graduating four years later. But those students, who do not manage the transition and fail to earn as many credits as they should during ninth grade, face a substantially elevated risk of dropping out of high school (Alspaugh, 1998b; Herlihy, 2007; Sum & Harrington, 2003). Unfortunately, few students ever recover from these early missteps in their educational career. In a study, 45 percent of dropouts reported that they entered high school unprepared for rigorous studies and many dropout shortly after they enter high school, or they fall behind and fail to graduate on time (Bridgeland, Dilulio & Morison, 2006).

The high school dropout rate is now occurring between the 9th and 10th grades due to an increasing number of ninth graders having failed to be promoted to the 10th grade (Belfanze & Legters, 2004). Interventions have been helpful in making a positive difference in students’ educational experience by helping them adjust and acclimate to high school (Sanders & Sanders, 1998). Other findings by Blum, McNeely and Rinehart (2002) and Osterman (2000) on schools interventions that address student’s behavioral and social needs find that students are more engaged in school and are more receptive to learning and both factors are strongly linked to academic success.
Quantitative Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore through quantitative methods the impact of a summer school intervention program on ninth grade students transitioning to high school. This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to accomplish the objectives of the study and other factors critical to an honest and pragmatic inquiry. The methodological plan addresses participants, settings, research design, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Paradigm

Positivism and post-positivism are often associated with quantitative research method (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Noor (2008) states positivism is an approach to the creation of knowledge through research which emphasizes the model of natural science. In contrast, post-positivism is about a reality which is socially constructed rather than objectively determined. Guba and Lincoln (2005) identify positivism, post-positivism and two of the main paradigms of contemporary qualitative research.

Participants and Setting

The populations for the study were comprised of students enrolled in a suburban school district near Sacramento, California. For the purpose of this study, this school district is identified as the Suburban Unified School District (SUSD).

The SUSD is one of the largest K-12 school districts in California and with a total student body of approximately 60,000 students. There are nine middle schools and nine comprehensive high schools. In the economic boom of the 1990’s, the school district experienced enormous demographic changes and it transitioned from a small, rural
district to one with a great deal of racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic diversity. The district's has a diverse population with 80 languages spoken by over 60,000 students. The SUSD is considered a top performing school district recognized throughout California as a leader in progressive education. The SUSD demographics include:

Table 1. Suburban Unified School District Ethnic Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

California Department of Education (2009)

Sample Population

A stratified sampling was selected as the sampling method in this study. Patton (2002) describes these as samples within samples and suggests that purposeful samples can be stratified or nested by selecting particular units or cases that vary according to a key dimension. The sample will include two participant groups; an experimental group and a control group within the total population of (n =120).

Experimental Group

The experimental group of 60 students (n=60), consists of transition students that graduated from middle school and participated in the summer school Bridges to Success Program. The participants in the experimental group were almost entirely students of color (92%) that included: 43.3 % African-American (26), 33.3% Hispanic (20), 8%
White (5), 6% Asian (4), 1.6% Native American (1), 1.6% Filipino (1), 1.6% Pacific Islander (1), with 3.3% declining to state (2).

Control Group

The control group consisted of 60 students (n=60) students that did not participate in the Bridges to Success Program. The control group were selected based on the fall enrollment of freshmen students entering high school in the SUSD. The participants in the control group included: 31.6% African-American (19), 36.6% Hispanic (22), 15% White (9), 6.6% Asian (4), 1.6% Native American (1), 6.6% Filipino (4), 1.6% Pacific Islander (1).

The two participant groups were comprised of students from SUSD middle schools based on the following criteria:

Criterion one is the middle school academic statewide ranking. In this study, schools were ranked as high achieving and low achieving middle schools based on their 2008-2009 California Academic Performance Index score (API).

Middle School 1 (MS-1) is a high achieving school based on a 788 API score with 32 students. Middle School 2 (MS-2) is a low achieving middle school based on a 640 API score with 24 students. Due to open enrollment for summer school 4 students were from other middle schools in the SUSD. The open enrollment accounted for 3 students from a low achieving middle school based on a 738 API score (MS-3) and 1 student was from a high achieving middle school based on a 817 API (MS-4) making a total of 60 participating students in the summer school intervention program.
Criterion two was the middle schools’ location. Both MS-1 and MS-2 were in close proximity and easy traveling distance to their respective high school.

In the fall semester for the 2009-2010 school year, the students in the experimental group enroll in several high schools in the SUSD. In this study, high school-1 (HS-1) will be designated as the source to collect all the data. The Data Processing Assistant (DPA) for HS-1 has been designated as the person to collect all of the data and provide it to the researcher.

The DPA provided the stratified sampling to the researcher in which both the experimental and the control groups were matched according to their ethnicity and gender. The study used attendance roster data from students in the experimental and control groups that were enrolled in a high school within the SUSD during the fall semester of 2009.

Bridges to Success Program

The Bridges to Success Program promotes student learning by providing an academic curriculum of basic skills for English/Language Arts, algebra, study skills, social and emotional learning. The Bridges to Success Program is a summer school intervention program designed to help make students prepared for the expectations and the demands of transitioning to high school in the fall semester. A primary objective of the Bridges to Success Program is to provide academic and behavior interventions for at-risk students identified by the literature review and related studies. The interventions focused on critical areas of academic readiness and intensively addressed self-awareness, self-management and responsible decision making (CASEL 2002).
The Bridges to Success Program developed students affective learning through the creation of Course Standards (appendix D). The Program’s Course Standards are an academic and behavior framework for intervention that provide learning objectives and expected outcomes for student's behavior and academic achievement.

**Research Design**

The research design of the quasi-experimental study will consist of an experimental group and a control group to test the effects of the intervention program. According to Muijs (2007) the quasi-experimental design is meant to approximate as closely as possible the advantages of true experimental design. The main distinction between experimental and quasi-experimental research lies in the allocation of persons to groups. The paired matching and allocation of persons to groups influence the researcher’s consideration of the quasi-experimental study.

The study is an analysis of the effects of a summer school intervention program for students learning an academic curriculum and developing social and emotional competencies through a variety of instructional activities. The students attended two separate summer school terms for 14 days for five and a half hours per day. Term 1 was held on the campus of HS-1 from June 10, 2009 to June 29, 2009 and Term 2 was held on the campus of HS-1 from June 30, 2009 to July 20, 2009. The extent of the treatment from the intervention program will be measured by the students’ satisfactory accomplishment or successful progress during the fall semester in managing behaviors or tasks that have been identified as dependent and independent variables in this study.
This quasi-experimental study will conduct an archival data analysis to measure quantitative data that include trends, comparisons and cross sectional-data that research findings and related literature have identified as being essential to the success of ninth grade students.

The study will test the null hypothesis and conduct inferential statistics to find if there is a statistical significance of greater than five percent (p > .05), or less than five percent (p < .05). Shaughnessy, Zechmiester and Zechmiester (2003) find that statistically significance is when the probability of an obtained difference in an experiment is smaller than would be expected if error variation alone were assumed to be responsible for the difference.

The researcher will conduct inferential tests that include independent t-tests and multivariate analysis of variance. This research study will seek to assess if there was an impact of Bridges to Success Program on the summer school students that participated in the program. The study will also measure the same variables on those students who did not participate in the Bridges to Success program.

*Pilot Study*

In the summer of 2008 the Bridges to Success Program was piloted by the SUSD and the student population included both eighth and ninth grade students. The finding from the pilot study provided the framework for this research study that included both quantitative and qualitative data from interviews, surveys and anecdotal evidence that found: (a) a ninth grade summer school transition program held on a high school campus was motivational and meaningful to students and parents, (b) the summer school program
should offer high school credits to entering freshmen students, (c) students need to learn
skills to develop social and emotional competencies, and (d) future programs should
focus only on eight grade graduates (Abdulmalik, 2008). The pilot study did not examine
other factors that research studies found to have relevance and an effect on student
transition, such as socioeconomic status, race, and parental involvement.

Data Collection

All of the quantitative student data for this study will be acquired by the
researcher from the DPA. The DPA will retrieve student enrollment data, grades,
attendance, truancy reports, comprehensive discipline logs and other pertinent
information from the SUSD’s database system. The researcher will analyze and perform
statistical tests on the following student data: (a) cumulative grade point averages, (b)
number of assigned detentions, (c) number of on-campus suspensions, (d) number of
school suspension days, (e) number of days absent from school, (f) number of times tardy
to class, (g) number of times truant, (h) and the number A-G courses passed or failed.

The fall semester includes two nine-week terms and the data was collected after
each term was completed. The first data was collected on October 15, 2009 at the end of
term-one. The second data was collected on January 5, 2010 at the end of term-two. Both
data collections were retrieved by the DPA and copies of the report to the researcher for
analysis.

Research Hypotheses

Four general research questions will guide this study. Each question has an
associated null and alternative hypothesis. A hypothesis is a statement of expectation
derived from a theory that proposes a relationship between two or more variables (Babbie, Halley & Zaino, 2000).

Research Question 1: Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to passing A-G courses with a grade of 2.0 or better?

1a. Null Hypothesis: There are no differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to passing A-G courses with a grade of 2.0 or better.

1b Alternative Hypothesis: There will be differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to passing A-G courses with a grade of 2.0 or better.

Research Question 2: Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to their cumulative grade point average for courses in the first semester?

2a. Null Hypothesis: There are no differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to their cumulative grade point average for courses in the first semester.

2b. Alternative Hypothesis: There will be differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to their cumulative grade point average for courses in the first semester.

Research Question 3: Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the mean number of detentions and suspensions in the first semester?
3a. Null Hypothesis: There are no differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the mean number of detentions and suspensions in the first semester.

3b. Alternative Hypothesis: There will be differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the mean number of detentions and suspensions in the first semester.

Research Question 4: Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the number of attendance issues in the first semester?

4a. Null Hypothesis: There are no differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the number of attendance issues in the first semester.

4b. Alternative Hypothesis: There will be differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the number of attendance issues in the first semester.

Data Analysis

All data analyses for this study will be performed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. SPSS is one of the most widely used statistical software for statistical analysis in social science research. SPSS can conduct statistical analysis calculating the mean, standard deviation, percentages, and independent t-test. SPSS can satisfactorily perform all of the statistical computations that will be used in this study.
**Research question 1.** "Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to passing A-G courses with a grade of 2.0 or better?"

In conducting an experiment, the independent variable is the variable that is varied or manipulated and the dependent variable and the outcomes is the response that is measured. For research Question 1, an independent t-test will be used to evaluate the significance between the independent variable of a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or better, and the dependent variable of calculating students GPA for A-G courses.

In experimental research, inferential statistical techniques are used to assess the differences between means when there is more than one dependent variable. For research question one, a t-test will be used to evaluate the relationship between a 2.0 GPA or better, and the eight A-G courses in calculating student’s GPA for the A-G courses: History/social science, English, mathematics, laboratory science, foreign Language, visual and performing arts, college preparatory electives. A t-test is used when you have dependents variables and can be used in a design where you want to answer questions about whether levels of the independent variable affect the dependent variable. The advantage of a t-test is that it can test the effects of the independent variable within a single analysis.

**Research question 2.** "Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to their cumulative grade point average for courses in the first semester?"

An independent t-test will be conducted to evaluate whether there is a statistical significance in the mean cumulative grade point average between the experimental group
and the control group. The t-test for independent samples is a one-way research design and this means that research participants are placed into groups for analysis of only one independent variable. Therefore they are observed one way, for one grouping variable. Each student will complete a total of eight courses for the first semester and the cumulative grade point average is determined by the calculating student's grades from elective and general education courses.

The t-test will also be used to analyze and compare the means, significance and standard deviation between the experimental and control groups regarding specific courses within the eight categories of A-G courses.

Research question 3. "Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the mean number of detentions and suspensions in the first semester?"

An independent t-test will be used to evaluate whether there is a statistical significance in the number of detentions and suspensions in the experimental group and control group. Shaughnessy, Zechmiester and Zechmiester (2003) find that a t-test is an ideal inferential test for comparing two means from different groups of subjects. An analysis will be conducted of two independent t-tests with an emphasis on measuring the interaction of two dependent variables (detention and suspensions) at the five percent or .05 level of significance.

The t-test can also be used to analyze and find significance of disciplinary categories that include: Saturday school detention, after school detention, home suspension, class suspension and on-campus suspensions.
Research question 4. "Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the number of attendance issues in the first semester?"

An independent t-test will be used to evaluate the significance of the number of attendance issues that a student has acquired. Attendance issues are determined by the number of times a student is truant, tardy or absent from school. The t-test was be used to evaluate whether there is significance differences with regards to absences between both the experimental and control groups. A t-test is used to show the significance of the difference between the means of two independent samples, and evaluate whether there is a statistical significance. Weinbach and Grinnell (2004) describe t-test as a group of parametric test that uses the t-distribution to examine the issue of inference and determine if any statically significance exits between the two samples or a sample and its population.

Summary

The methodology as outlined in Chapter Three describes and explains important components regarding how the data for the research study was collected and analyzed. The methodological plan identification includes the participants, settings, research design, and data collection. Finally, the chapter concluded with a section describing how inferential tests were used in the quantitative data analysis. In Chapter Four, a review of the findings from the quantitative analysis is presented. In Chapter Five, the implications and conclusions are discussed and recommendations for future research are made.
Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS

*Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of a summer school intervention program on ninth grade student transition to high school. The study examined the first semester of high school and the probability of ninth grade students being successful if they participated in a summer school intervention program compared to students that did not. The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to passing A-G courses with a grade of 2.0 or better?
2. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to their cumulative grade point average for courses in the first semester?
3. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the mean number of detentions and suspensions in the first semester?
4. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the number of attendance issues in the first semester?

In this chapter the results are presented and the findings are discussed. The chapter is organized with an introduction, descriptive statistics, analysis of the research questions and summary.
Descriptive Statistics

The population for the study was comprised of students that were in enrolled in seven high schools in the suburban school district for the 2009-2010 fall semester. The population included sixty-one males (50.8%) and fifty-nine females (49.2%).

Table 2 data shows the ethnic breakdown of the population in the study. The population consisted of African-American 37.5%, Hispanic 35%, White 11.7%, Asian 5.8%, Filipino 4.2, Pacific Islander 2%, American Indian 2% and the remaining .8% decline to state. The data also indicated that the participants were a majority of color in which African American and Hispanic totaled (72.5%) of students.

Table 2. Ethnic Population in the Study (n=120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline to State</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants were enrolled in six suburban middle schools and a majority of the students 93.3% (n=112) were from middle school 1 (MS-1) and middle school 2 (MS-2). The remaining students were from four other middle schools and accounted for 6.6% (n=8) of the study population.

In the fall semester, the participants (n=120) in the study were enrolled in seven high schools in the Suburban School District. All of the high schools were in close
proximity to their feeder middle school. Therefore, incoming ninth grade students are able to walk to their respective high school.

The percentage of students in the study that were enrolled in each of the seven Suburban Schools: HS-1 = 75% (n=90), HS-2 = 18.3% (n=22), HS-3 = 1.7% (n=2), HS-4 = .8% (n=1), HS-5 = 1.7% (n=2), HS-6 = .8% (n=1), and HS-7 = 1.7% (n=2).

Overall, HS-1 and HS-2 accounted for 93.3% of the students in the study (n=113).

Table 3. Total Students in the Study Enrolled in Suburban High Schools (n=120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Schools</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS-1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question #1

Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to passing A-G courses with a grade of 2.0 or better?

Table 4 data shows that there are seven subjects listed for the A-G courses which are the University of California and the California State University System course requirements for entering freshmen. The data table provides the course name, number of students in each group, the mean score for each course.
Table 4. A-G Course Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>.8393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.7813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1.2281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.1373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1.2222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.0667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.4750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.4667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAPA</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.8125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.2763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.8636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1.1939</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An independent t-test was used to measure the significance of the grade point average (GPA) for history courses and found a statistical difference between the two groups \[ t(58) = -3.387, p = .014 \]. The mean GPA score for experimental group was .83, and for the control group it was 1.78. There was a twenty-eight percent (46%) difference in the mean GPA scores between the groups.

An independent t-test was used to measure the significance of the English courses GPA and found a statistical difference between the means of the two groups \[ t(110) = -1.139, p = .243 \]. The mean GPA score for the experimental group was 1.20, and the mean score for the control group was 1.22. There was a two point percent (2%) difference in the mean GPA scores between the groups.

An independent t-test was used to measure the significance of the math
courses GPA and found a statistical difference between the means of the two groups 
\[ t(103) = -0.341, p = 0.579 \]. The mean GPA score for the experimental group was 1.13, and 
the mean score for the control group was 1.22. There was a seven percent (7\%) difference 
in the mean GPA scores between the groups.

An independent t-test was used to measure the significance of the science 
courses GPA and found a statistical difference between the means of the two groups 
\[ t(19) = 1.514, p = 0.183 \]. The mean score for experimental group was 1.06, and for the 
control group it was 2.0. There was a forty-seven percent (47\%) difference in the mean 
GPA scores in science between the groups.

An independent t-test was used to measure the significance of world 
language courses GPA and found a statistical difference between the means of the two 
groups \[ t(48) = 0.025, p = 0.245 \]. The mean GPA score for the experimental group was 
1.47, and the mean score for the control group was 1.46. There was less than a one 
percent, (0.68\%), difference in the mean GPA scores between the groups.

An independent t-test was used to measure the significance of the visual and 
performing arts courses GPA and found a statistical difference between the means of the 
two groups \[ t(68) = -0.769, p = 0.142 \]. The mean GPA score for experimental group was 
1.81, and for the control group it was 2.27. There was a twenty-percent (20\%) difference 
in the mean GPA scores between the groups.

An independent t-test was used to measure the significance of the elective 
courses GPA and found a statistical difference between the means of the two groups
[t(48) = -1.487, \( p = .989 \)]. The mean GPA score for experimental group was .86, and for the control group it was 1.19. There was a twenty-eight percent (28%) difference in the mean GPA scores between the groups.

**Research Question #2**

Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to their cumulative grade point average for courses in the first semester?

Table 5 data showed the cumulative grade point average for both groups. A four-point scale is used to compute each student’s GPA, the letter grade “A” equals four points (4.0), and the scale progresses down to zero points (.0) for the letter “F.” The cumulative grade point average is calculated by adding all of the total grades for courses that a student attends in a semester, with 4.0 being the highest grade for any one class. Then divide the sum total of grades by the number of classes and that will result in the grade point average for all of the classes.

**Table 5. High School Cumulative Grade Point Average:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School GPA</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.5327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.8090</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An independent t-test was used to measure the significance of student’s GPA and found a statistical difference between the means of the two groups \([t(118) = -1.830, \ p = .981]\). The mean GPA score for the experimental group was 1.53, and the mean GPA score for control group was 1.80. There was an eighteen percent (18%) difference in the mean GPA scores between the groups.
Research Question #3

Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the mean number of detentions and suspensions in the first semester?

Detentions and Saturday school and suspension are behavior consequences and punitive measures that are assigned to students. The measure of success for detentions and suspensions is determined by a low rate in the two categories.

Table 6 data shows the number of detentions, Saturday school, and suspensions which consisted of on-campus suspension and home suspensions. The data displayed is categorical data and it is measured by calculating the number of days or class periods that a student serves a detention or suspension.

Table 6. Detentions and Suspensions Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detentions</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.9167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday School</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.1667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.0909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Campus Suspensions</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspensions</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.3333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An independent t-test \[t(46) = -1.214, p = .113\] was used to measure the significance of (after school) detentions that were served and found a statistical difference between the means of the two groups. The data showed the mean number of detentions served for the experimental group was 2.25, and for control group it was 2.91. There was
a twenty-two percent (22%) difference in the mean number of detentions served between
the groups, and the experimental group accounted for the lowest number of detentions.

Each Saturday school class requires students to serve a total of four hours for each
citation. An independent t-test \([t(21) = .103, p = .464]\) was used to measure the
significance of Saturday Schools detentions served and found a statistical difference
between the means of the two groups. The mean score for by the experimental group was
2.16, and the control group was 2.09. There was a three percent (3%) difference in the
mean number of detentions served between the groups.

On-campus suspension is a program that is used to house students (at school) that
receive a consequence as a result of a class infraction. On-campus suspension is
calculated by class periods that a student serves. A student can serve a class period, or
serve multiple class periods of on-campus suspension for his or her behavior. An
independent t-test \([t(20) = .550, P = 0.406]\) was used to measure the mean number of on-
campus suspensions that were served and found a statistical difference between the
means of the two groups. The mean score for the experimental group was 3.25, and for
the control group it was 2.50. There was a twenty-three percent (23%) difference in the
mean number of on-campus suspensions served between the groups. The on-campus
suspension rate was lower for the control group.

Home suspensions are calculated by the number of days that a student is not
permitted to attend any school. When a student receives a home suspension it means that
he or she has violated a major California Education Code infraction. An independent
t-test \([t(17) = -0.611, P = 0.897]\) was used to measure the mean number of home suspensions that were served and found a statistical difference between the means of the two groups. The experimental group students served a mean number of 4.33 days of home suspension, and the control group served a mean number of 5.10 days of home suspension. There was a fifteen percent (15\%) difference in the mean number of detentions served between the groups. The home suspensions category results were lower for the experimental group.

**Research Question #4**

Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups with regard to the number of attendance issues in the first semester?

Attendance issues include absences, truancy and arriving tardy to class. Absences are classified as the number of days that a student is absent from school. Truancy is measured by the number of class periods that a student is late beyond 30 minutes, or not in attendance for the entire class period, and tardy is when a student is late to class and is marked late, but less than 30 minutes. Both truancy and tardy are measure by class periods, in which a student could be marked absent or late for that period only (i.e. period 1, period 2, etc.), but the student could be recorded as attending other class periods (i.e. period 3, period 4, etc.).
Table 7. Attendance Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absences</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.5517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4.4146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14.5238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9.4130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tardy</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9.4130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8.9815</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 data showed the total number of absences, truancy and tardies that the participants in the study recorded within the 85 days of the 2009-2010 fall semester in their respective high school. Statistical tests were used to measure the significance of attendance issues that consist of students being truant, tardy and the number of days absent from school.

An independent t-test \([t(68) = .108, P = .413]\) was used to measure the mean number of days Absent and found a statistical difference between the means of the two groups. The data found that there were differences in the mean number of days absent from school for the experimental group was 4.5 days, and for the control group it was 4.4 days absent from school. There was a two percent (2%) difference in the mean number of days absent from school between the groups.

Truancy is measured by the amount of times that students arrive to class beyond 30 minutes late, or are not in attendance for entire class period. An independent t-test \([t(86) = 1.542, P = .066]\) was used to measure the mean number of truancies and found a statistical difference between the means of the two groups. The data indicated that experimental group had a mean number of 14.5 periods of truancy, and the control group
had a mean number of 9.4 periods of truancy. There was a fifty-four percent (54%) difference in the mean number of truancy between the groups.

In total, students were truant to class total of 1219 times, and of those times that students were truant to class 611 were in the first period alone. This finds that the first period classes accounted for half of all lateness when students are arriving (see table 8).

Tardy is recorded as a student arriving to class late between 5-30 minutes. An independent t-test \[ t(92) = .716, P = .732 \] was used to measure the mean number of tardies and found a statistical difference between the means of the two groups. The data found that there were differences in the mean number of tardies for the experimental group was 9.4, and the control group had a mean score of 8.9. There was a six percent (6 %) difference in the mean number of truancy between the groups. The total number of times that students were tardy to class totaled 1059, and of those times that students were late to class 593 were in the first period alone. This finds that the first period classes accounted for 55% of all lateness when students are arriving (see table 8).

The first period truancy and tardiness are major concerns for the high school based on the evidence provided in table 8. The data indicates that there is significant loss of educational time from students not being in class. As reported by the data, students were tardy 1059 times for all class periods in term one. Those students that came late to class in the first period accounted for 593 (55%) of all tardy/late arrivals out of 1059 students. The data finds that attendance issues were problematic and that they accounted for a high level of truancy, tardiness, and absences for both groups.
Table 8. First Period Tardy and Truancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>First Period Class</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tardy</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1059</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>55%</td>
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Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of a summer school intervention program on ninth grade transition to high school. The experimental study was designed to measure the significance of student’s actions and behaviors in the first semester of high school. An archival data analysis of the Suburban School District's student information system was used to measure student performance in the areas of attendance, behavior and academic achievement.

Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyze, summarize, and draw inferences from the data. Descriptive statistics provided the attributes and number of students in the study. Inferential statistics provided the probability and significance of events to make inferences from data and a method to examine the predictive capability of the fifteen independent variables in the study. The levels of significance were determined at the .05 level.

A total population of 120 ninth grade students attended seven high schools in a suburban school district in the 2009-2010 school year, fall semester. All the students participated in the study in which complete data was available and included in the analysis. Other findings were that eighty-eight percent of the students in the study were primarily African American and Hispanic and the gender data found that there were sixty-one males and fifty-nine females.
The review of the literature focused on the development and implementation of ninth grade transition to high school (Kerr, 2002; Reyes, Gillock, Kobus & Sanchez, 2000; Lee, Bryk & Smith, 1993). Extensive research was found regarding the historical perspective of junior high school and middle school (Shedd, 2003; Manning, 2000). Most of the studies focused on the importance of the ninth grade school year and how it was impacted by an array of academic and student behavior concerns (Zyoch, 2006), as well as motivation (Walsh, 2002), anxiety and apprehension on the part of transitioning students (Bridgeland, 2006).

Several studies (Barone, Aguirre-Deandreis, & Trickett, 1991; Williams & Richman, 2007) identified significant structural factors such as navigating complex bureaucratic systems, large campuses and sizable student populations (Miles & Valentine, 2001). Studies also discussed the negative aspects of high school transition, and the relevance of how race, family and socioeconomic status effect the transition experience and placement of students in high school (Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano, & Hawkins, 2000; Furstenberg, Nield, & Stoner-Eby, 2003; Rumberger, 1995). Studies found that there are disproportionate numbers of failing schools that are predominantly comprised of poor, racial and ethnic minority students that lack basic reading and math skills upon entering high school (Orfield, Losen, Wald & Swanson, 2004; Askos & Galassi, 2004a).

Research found the effects of low socioeconomic status and poverty on student achievement and suggests that it is a significant deterrent to academic success (Orfield & Lee, 2005; Planty & Devoe, 2005). Weiss and Bearman, (2007) found that there were
positive aspects of high school transition and that not all students were at risk. Research found the effects of social and emotional learning, intervention programs and transition programs, all provide implications for well structured transition, academic achievement, and student success (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004; CASEL, 2003).

Extensive research was found regarding stressors and the negative aspects of high school such as multiple teachers, increased curricula demands, and students being unprepared for the rigors of academic subjects (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001; Oates, Flores, & Weishew, 1998). Several studies found the persistent rate of low academic achievement, issues of disruptive behavior and chronic absenteeism put ninth grade students at-risk of failure (Kemple, Herlihy & Smith, 2005; Haney & Morgan, 2004). Black (2004) finds that ninth grade is the “make it or break it year” for being on track to graduate or drop out of school.

In order to gain a better perspective of transition an analysis was conducted to find the causes of student’s academic failure, disruptive behavior and poor attendance. As a result, the Triangular Effect Model was developed from the literature review and it provides a framework to help understand some of the causes and poor choices that student make (Williams & Richman, 2007; Herlihy, 2007; Sum & Harrington, 2003). The model proposes that choice is primarily a decision or action that students make, or they are forced to make. The model lists forty negative outcomes based on research findings that provide insight of how attendance, student behavior, and academics are intertwined with each other. The model holds that negative experiences and outcomes are based on
behavioral choices and when there was two or more of these factors present in a student's
behavior, or actions, it can be an indicator of other possible negative outcomes.
Dedmond, Bround and LaFauci (2006); Legters and Kerr (2001) identified the
applicability of intervention and transition programs and the implications for educational
leadership.

Conclusions and Implications

Research Questions

As designed this study sought to find the significance of the following research
questions:

1. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups
   with regard to passing A-G courses with a grade of 2.0 or better?
2. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups
   with regard to their cumulative grade point average for courses in the first
   semester?
3. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups
   with regard to the mean number of detentions and suspensions in the first
   semester?
4. Are there differences among students in the intervention and control groups
   with regard to the number of attendance issues in the first semester?
Research Question 1

There are a total of seven A-G courses in the study and the science and visual and performing arts courses were the only two courses that achieved the benchmark goal of a 2.0 grade point average, and both were accomplished by the control group. The results were that students in the study were proficient in two of the seven A-G courses. The experimental group findings from the A-G grade scores are significant and have considerable implications for the academic placement of ninth grade students as well as a potential for advance placement in high school. These courses are considered the gatekeeper courses and the pass/fail rate of these courses are crucial and can profoundly alter students future high school career as well as their college acceptability.

Research Question 2

The factors drawn from this research study in regards to academic achievement showed that neither the experimental or control groups met the benchmark 2.0 grade point average. The cumulative grade point average is the progressive sum of student’s academic performance for all of their courses. It is important that over time as students move along the curriculum continuum of high school courses that their grade point average should move positively above the minimal proficiency of 2.0 or higher.

There was a 14% difference in the cumulative grade point average between the control group and experimental group. The experimental group’s lower grade point average means that they are underperforming academically below both the standard proficiency level and amongst their peers in the control group. A low grade point average has a significant impact on their future because poor academic achievement primarily
impacts: (a) students overall academic progress in high school, (b) their ability to
graduate within four years, (c) the repetition of repeating failed courses, (d) makes it
unlikely to take extracurricular and enrichment courses, and (e) the subsequent
ramification of non-acceptance or placement into postsecondary institutions.

Research Question 3

The research question concerning student discipline yield positive results for the
experimental group because they had less discipline issues than the control group. The
experimental group’s success may be due to some extent the summer school intervention
program that placed a great deal of emphasis on teaching students the construct of social
and emotional learning. The affective approach had a positive impact on the experimental
students behavior in terms of disciplinary issue by teaching students how to manage their
behavior, the negative behaviors of others and how to avoid consequences through self-
management. The data showed that two out of four of the behavior categories were lower
for the experimental group:

- The Saturday school detentions were lower for the control group and there
  was a 3% difference in the mean number of detentions served between the
groups.
- The on-campus suspensions was lower for the experimental group and there
  was a 23% difference in the mean number of on-campus suspensions served
  between the groups.
- Home Suspensions was lower for the experimental group and there was a 15%
difference in the mean number of home suspensions.
The data showed that for the control group:

- The number of detentions served after school was lower for the control group and there was a 22% difference in the mean number of detentions served between the groups.

*Research Question 4*

The purpose of the research study was to determine the extent to which incoming ninth grade students, who received instruction in a summer school intervention program, were able to demonstrate successful transition into high school during the fall semester. In the study, the analysis of attendance indicators showed that experimental group had the most attendances issues overall. Although students in both groups had a disproportionate amount of absenteeism, the experimental group's daily absentee rate was considerably high.

The negative attendance rates for both groups can adversely affect areas of student performance and achievement. The study found that a combined fifty percent of all students in the both groups were habitually late to class, or they missed class entirely. Most of all, the excessive attendance problems happened at the beginning of the school day. The findings indicate that a large number of students had difficulty arriving to school on time, getting to class on time, or not showing up to class at all. One factor to consider is that a significant number of these students are transported school by their parents, and this suggests that the punctuality of arriving to school was beyond their control.
Reflections on the Bridges to Success Program

The Bridges to Success Program provided an opportunity to offer academic and behavior skills to needy and at-risk ninth grade students. In the process of conducting the research for the study it became evident to the researcher that there were lessons to be learned in this experiment and should be noted in the this section.

Parental Involvement

The concept and purpose of the Bridges to Success Program was important to both parents as well as to the students in the study. All of the parents wanted their child to be successful and to begin high school on a good note. A majority of the students in the program came from two schools; one was low income and the other middle class. All of the middle class students were notified and called in advance of their child's specific starting date for the summer school program and they showed up accordingly. The low income parents did not know their child’s start day due to the fact that almost seventy-percent of those parents did not have a working contact number in the school’s database system. What all of those low income and poor parents did know for sure was the start date for summer school and they all showed up on the first day to make sure that their child got into the program. Those parents showed commitment, persistence and hope by waiting in long lines to enroll their child, and when other poor parents that found out about the program also showed up throughout the length of the summer school program. There were more students for enrollment than there were slots available in the class.
Bridges to Success Logo

One of the summer school students developed an artistic expression that became the symbol of the Bridges to Success Program. The illustration contained images of two distinctly different school mascot's; one was a hornet (middle school mascot) and the other was a cardinal (high school mascot). In the artist drawing he conveyed how the images of a hornet transformed into a cardinal over a bridge. The illustration symbolized how the Bridges to Success Program helps to transform students through the transition process from one stage into another. It also showed how the artist was able to internalize and reflect the concept of transition. (figure 4, in appendix C). A noteworthy comment is that a student's interpretation of transition became the program's official logo.

Rituals and Rites of Passages

The students supported the concept of transition and the symbolism of the official logo. Students also recognized the uniqueness of the symbolism and as an identity. They then developed a rite of passages to validate amongst themselves when one of their peers made a significant transition in their estimation. The rite of passage was connected not only to the symbolism, but also incorporated the Bridges to Success Course Standards (appendix D) such as; developing an understanding of character and the importance of personal character in high school and beyond.

The rite of passage ritual was usually held during a class meeting and a peer would nominate a classmate for recognition and state why the nominee was is being recognized. Then the group would agree or disagree if that person had made some kind of progress, either academically or behavioral as outlined in the Course Standards. Students
were also assessed on how much they participated in the Community Lecture Series (figure 7, in appendix C), or participated in class activity (i.e. took notes, asked questions, etc.). If the group agreed that the nominee made some effort or satisfactory progress in any of those areas, then he or she would be allowed to sign their name on a copy of the logo poster (figure 6, in appendix C). The signing of the poster became the symbolic rite of passage when a student received the privilege to sign their name on the poster. After the signing that student would then be given a tee-shirt with the official Bridges to Success logo printed on it (figure 5, in appendix C).

**Recommendations**

With increased national, state, and local expectations for the academic achievement of ninth grade students the following are recommendations for future research based on this study.

The first recommendation is that researchers should consider developing a more comprehensive and expanded version of the Bridges to Success Program. Specifically, develop a robust summer school intervention program (Roderick, Engel & Nagoya, 2003) that intensely addresses the areas of student development such as academic readiness, organization skills, behavior, and social skills. The Bridges to Success Program should be increased from a 14 day term to a 34 day term to allow more time for students to learn and absorbed the information. The Bridges to Success Program should also be continued throughout the entire freshmen year (Bunting, 2004). A continued program would support and build on the foundation of Social and Emotional learning that students were
exposed to in the summer school program. Other recommendations that the literature review found to be effective for ninth grade transition are:

- Ninth Grade Academy – a grade-level academy that is housed in a separate facility or location that physically separates ninth graders, and develops their capacity as high school students (Kemple & Herlihy, 2004).
- The Freshman Transition Initiative Program – a classroom-based student advisory intervention program that is based on a career exploration, character development and self-accountability model (Dedmond, Bround & LaFauci, 2006).
- The Freshmen Seminar – an orientation course that all ninth-graders have to take and it provides a foundation for students through teaching study skills, time management, note-taking, goal setting and how to manage peer relations (Akos & Galassi, 2004b).

The second recommendation is to consider William Perry’s (1970) Student Development Theory when developing and structuring future transition to high school programs. Perry's theory describes the transition as a process and there are transition stages that students go through as well as a cognitive process. Perry's theory provides a context that is useful to bridge an understanding of the student development process and ninth grade transition. He also provides a framework that could be applied to an intervention program's goals, learning objectives and performance outcomes.

The third recommendation is to develop "rites of passage" in the program.
The rite of passage marks an important time when a student in the Bridges to Success Program reaches a new and significant academic or behavioral change in his or her life. The rite of passage is can be built into the program as an expectation or benchmark. These rites of passage should also have some form of student involvement in developing their own rites of passage. A positive outcome of creating rituals is that it helped students to increase their motivation, sense of self, and ownership.

**Limitations**

The results from this study are promising and they also raise some valid questions about the quality of an intervention program for ninth grade transition to high school. There are limitations that should be considered when drawing conclusions about this study. A major limitation was the overall length and duration of the intervention program. The number days were insufficient and administrators had to constantly negotiate on many levels to address instructional issues associated with the getting though the curriculum and not feeling hurried.

Each of two summer school sessions was conducted over a two week period (thirteen working days) and this was not enough time for students to process the skills of the social and emotional learning, math, and English curriculums. It was especially difficult for students who functioned at the academically basic or below basic levels. Moreover, students needed more time to learn, absorb, and process the curriculum content. The instructor needed additional instructional time to implement the curriculums scope, sequence and activities. As well as, conduct formative and summative assessments and monitor the progress of students overall learning. There was a constant struggled to
fit in all of the activities in the scheduled amount of time of the intervention program. Mainly, more time is required to thoroughly assess student’s academic ability levels, and time to teach and reinforce a wide range of behavior management skills.

**Summary**

The current study focused on the impact of a summer intervention program to help ninth grade student’s deal with the transition factors that are inherent with high school. The intervention program sought to provide adolescents with skills, resources and a framework of thinking to better solve interpersonal, social, behavior and academic problems and to deal with acculturative stress of belonging to a high school community.
APPENDIX A

Bridges to Success Program

**Bridges to Success Program Overview**

*Mission:*

The mission of the Bridges to Success Program is to: (a) accelerate gains in student performance, (b) provide a safe and secure environment for students and (c) provide intervention services for transitioning students (d) establish vertical articulation between the middle and high school (e) strengthen partnerships with students, parents and schools.

**Bridges to Success Program**

The Bridges to Success transition to high school program was developed with the goal of providing positive intervention experiences for at-risk eight graders coming into ninth grade. The program is a collaboration between the Suburban High School and several local Middle Schools to address student academic deficiencies, provide behavior support and to teach study skills. Some of the goals and objectives that were set for the Bridges to Success program included:

1. Creating a positive school experience for the students.
2. Develop an asset-based program designed to increase student motivation.
3. Improving the student’s opinions, attitude and outlook towards learning, school environment, and social climate.
4. Teaching students social and emotional learning skills.
5. Providing students with positive opportunities to earn elective high school credit.
6. CASHEE Mathematic and English/Language Arts preparation with the goal of increasing the passing rate of first time test takers.

7. Setting the expectation and organizational structure for successful transitions from middle school into high school.

8. Teaching life skills that enable student to acculturate into the norms of High School.

9. The development of Course Standard for academic and behavioral expectations
APPENDIX B

Bridges to Success Program Logo, Tee-Shirt, Poster and Lecture Series

Bridges to Success Program Logo

Bridge to Success Tee-Shirt
Rite of Passage Poster

Bridges to Success Community Lecture Series
# APPENDIX C

California High School Exit Exam
English/Language Art Readiness Summer Course

Text: Measuring Up to the California Content Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Topic &amp; Standard</th>
<th>CA Standards</th>
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Chapter 5: Writing Strategies and Applications

Strategies for writing narrative
Strategies for writing a response to literature
Writing a summary
Writing a report

Writing Strategies and Applications

WA4.2.1, WS4.1.1, 4.1.2
WS4.1.4, WS4.1.10
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Page - B268
### APPENDIX D

**California High School Exit Exam**  
**Algebra Readiness Summer Course**

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<td>Coordinate graphing, comparing integers, transformations, solving story problems</td>
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<tr>
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APPENDIX E

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum

Text: Skills for Life: The Fundamental You Need to Succeed
Authors: Jarvis Mike and Jonathan Peck.

The Skills for Life Curriculum:
- Prepares people of all ages to be responsible adults
- Enhances their prospects for success
- Promotes moral standards of respect, responsibility, honesty and fairness
- Encourages virtues that are good for the individual and good for their society

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APPENDIX F

Bridges to Success Course Standards Program

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1. **The student will develop a strong academic base to prepare for passing the CAHSEE during their sophomore year of high school.**
   The student is expected to:
   - A. Describe the importance of the California High School Exit Exam and the two main components of the Exam.
   - B. Develop Basic English Language Arts skills necessary to pass the ELA portion of the CAHSEE.
   - C. Develop basic Math skills necessary to pass the Math portion of the CAHSEE

2. **The student will learn and develop various study skills that are necessary throughout high school and beyond.**
   The student is expected to:
   - A. Develop strategies to successfully complete homework assignments
   - B. Learn strategies to overcome test anxiety, test studying, and test taking
   - C. Learn strategies for reading and interpreting textbook
   - D. Develop the skills needed to take notes in class and how to use those notes when studying

3. **The student will develop and maintain proper organizational skills necessary to promote success during high school.**
   The student is expected to:
   - A. Develop time management strategies including keeping and maintaining a daily agenda, weekly agenda, and student planner
   - B. Develop strategies to list and prioritize homework and other assignments
   - C. Develop the skills necessary to organize and maintain the storage of personal and school items
   - D. Develop and maintain a portfolio of class work and use that portfolio to present what has been learned throughout the course in a logical and organized manner

1. **The student will develop an understanding of the Grade Point Average (GPA) system and its importance in the high school setting.**
   The student is expected to:
   - A. Understand and explain how GPA is calculated and its importance to their high school grades, extra-curricular activities, and high school success
   - B. Explain the GPA scale and what number is needed for college entrance, scholarships, and financial aid

2. **The student will develop an understanding of the requirements and classes needed for high school graduation.**
   The student is expected to:
   - A. Understand and explain the difference between elective credits, A-G requirements, and Advance Placement (AP) credits
   - B. Explain the minimum number of credits needed to graduate high school and in which curricular areas those credits exist
3. The student will develop an understanding of character and the importance of their personal character in high school and beyond.
The student is expected to:
   A. Identify the qualities of character
   B. Maintain a two week character journal and analyze their personal character traits
   C. Recognize areas of strengths and weaknesses within their character and how to work towards the improvement of those areas for personal growth and development

4. The student will develop an understanding of the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills necessary for success in both high school and the real world.
The student is expected to:
   A. Identify and explain the 5 SEL competencies and their importance in life
   B. Maintain an interactive daily journal that is reflective of multiple SEL aspects and how to integrate them into their daily lives

5. The student will develop an understanding of the different consequences for negative behavior on the high school campus.
The student is expected to:
   A. Understand and explain the causes of being assigned different discipline consequences
   B. Understand and explain the differences between detentions, suspensions, and referrals.

6. The student will develop an understanding of the meaning and value of self.
The student is expected to:
   A. Understand and recognize the importance of developing a positive self image
   B. Understand and recognize the importance of developing and maintaining positive self worth
   C. Define the term responsibility and recognize what it means to make responsible decisions throughout life

7. The student will develop skills needed to build and maintain positive personal and social relationships with others.
The student is expected to:
   A. Recognize and respect differences between individuals, their beliefs, their cultures, and socioeconomic status
   B. Recognize and utilize the different ways of speaking between peers, teachers, parents, other adults, and school employees
   C. Identify at least 3 people in their lives that are positive life-long connections and recognize why those relationships are important
   D. Understand and explain the rules of etiquette and why the use of manners are important in personal, social, and educational situations

8. The student will develop an understanding of and the importance of maintaining good attendance.
The student is expected to:
   A. Recognize the importance of good attendance and the consequences of poor attendance and tardiness.
   B. Identify the outcomes of positive attendance at school and in other situations.
   C. Understand the social responsibility of being punctual and how to incorporate punctuality into a life-long habit
REFERENCES


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Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved April 10, 2009, from,
http://www.all4ed.org/whats_at_stake/CrisisInHighSchools.pdf.


Centennial School District.


