

The University of Southern Mississippi
The Aquila Digital Community

Dissertations

Fall 12-2006

Crossing the Bridge from Eighth to Tenth Grade: Can Ninth Grade Schools Make It Better?

Eddie James Peasant II
University of Southern Mississippi

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Peasant, Eddie James II, "Crossing the Bridge from Eighth to Tenth Grade: Can Ninth Grade Schools Make It Better?" (2006). *Dissertations*. 1351.

<https://aquila.usm.edu/dissertations/1351>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by The Aquila Digital Community. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of The Aquila Digital Community. For more information, please contact aquilastaff@usm.edu.

The University of Southern Mississippi

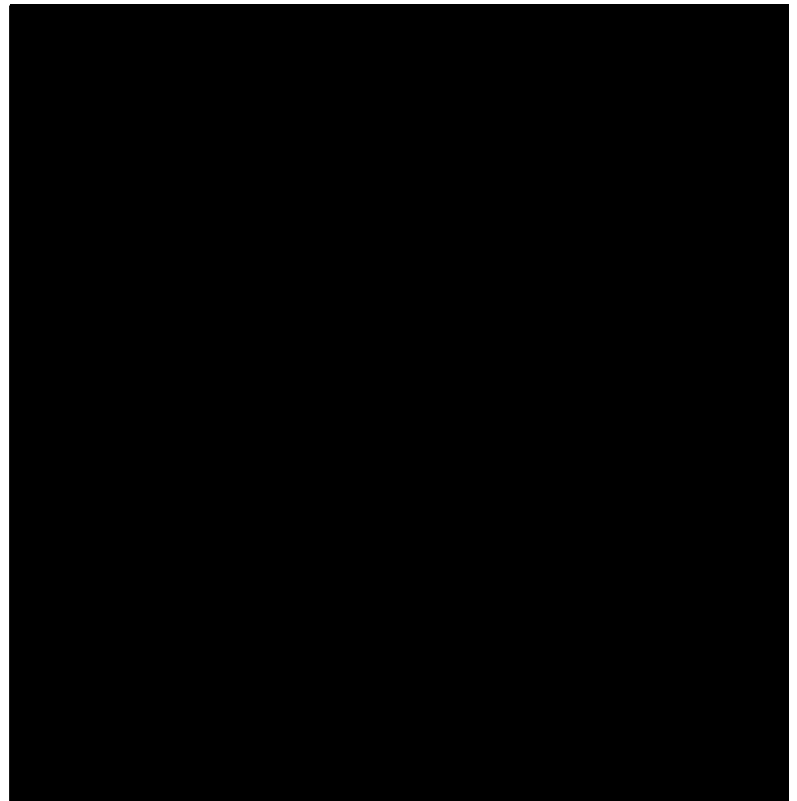
CROSSING THE BRIDGE FROM EIGHTH TO TENTH GRADE: CAN NINTH
GRADE SCHOOLS MAKE IT BETTER?

by

Eddie James Peasant II

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Studies Office
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Approved:



December 2006

COPYRIGHT BY
EDDIE JAMES PEASANT II
2006

ABSTRACT

CROSSING THE BRIDGE FROM EIGHTH TO TENTH GRADE: CAN NINTH GRADE SCHOOLS MAKE IT BETTER?

by Eddie James Peasant II

December 2006

Ninth grade is a complicated time period in the school years of young adolescents. They face many social, emotional, physical, and academic issues during the transition from eighth grade to the freshman year. In some cases, these problems in ninth grade lead to increases dropout rate. This matter is addressed in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). School districts across the country are establishing programs to deal with this dilemma of students transitioning from the middle grades to high school. One such program is the ninth grade school or academy.

The general purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of ninth grade schools. The study focused on student achievement in ninth grade schools or academies compared to ninth grade students enrolled in traditional high schools housing grades nine through 12. Student achievement, for this study, was assessed by the students' scores on the Mississippi Subject Area Testing Program (SAPT) in Algebra I and Biology I for the 2005-2006 school year. Other variables tested were gender and ethnicity of the students used in this study. All students used in this study were enrolled in the ninth grade during the 2005-2006 school year at one of the six schools selected for this research.

Three of the schools were ninth grade schools or academies and the other three were traditional high schools. The students were enrolled in Algebra I and/or Biology I course(s) and therefore took the Subject Area Test for the respective course(s). Students at the ninth grade schools were compared to students at the traditional high schools based on SAPT scores, gender, and ethnicity.

In this study, there was a significant difference in Algebra I scores on the SAPT between students attending ninth grade schools or academies when compared to students attending traditional high schools. Students in the ninth grade schools scored significantly higher on the Algebra I test.

There was also a significant difference in Biology I scores on the SAPT between students attending ninth grade schools or academies when compared to students attending traditional high schools. Students in the ninth grade schools scored significantly higher on the Biology I test.

Further analyzed data revealed significant differences, based on ethnicity, in achievement of Biology I students in the ninth grade academies when compared to the Biology I students in the traditional high schools. The African American students in the ninth grade academies had a higher mean score on the Biology I SAPT than Caucasian and African American students enrolled in the traditional high schools. Additionally, the Caucasian students in the ninth grade academies scored only .03 higher than the mean score of African American students in the ninth grade academies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer would like to express sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following professors who assisted in the completion of this study: Dr. Ronald Styron, chair of the doctoral committee and academic advisor, for his leadership, input, support, and words of encouragement; Dr. J. T. Johnson, statistician of the committee, for his support and statistical assistance; Dr. Portia Hull for her words of encouragement and her commitment to serve on the committee; and Dr. David Lee for his knowledge, support, and constructive input.

Others contributed to the study in a variety of ways, and the writer wishes to thank them as well: those superintendents, curriculum directors, and principals who took the time out to gather the test data and information used for this study; Dr. Phil Burchfield, superintendent of the Starkville School District, for his words of encouragement and consent to use data from the school district; Dr. Tommye Henderson, superintendent of the Clinton Public Schools, for her words of encouragement and consent to use data from the school district; Mr. Tim Martin, Assistant Superintendent of the Clinton Public Schools, for gathering and sharing data from the school district; Mr. Glen East, for his consent to use data from the school district; Dr. Cassandra Conner, Assistant Superintendent of the Harrison County School District, for gathering and sharing data from the school district; Mr. Ted Poore, principal of Rosa Scott Ninth Grade School, for his consent to use data from the school; Mrs. Jean Massey, principal of Northwest Rankin High School, for her consent to use data from the school.

Special appreciation is also extended to colleagues and friends who assisted in the completion of this document through moral, spiritual, and academic support: Dr. Melanie Nelson, who spent many hours proofreading, James Reeves, Dr. Chuck Benigno, Dr. Letitia Dixon, Angy Carter, Kenny Hudson, and Rene McMillon.

Finally, the writer would like to express appreciation and gratitude to those individuals who supported him throughout the dissertation process, whether it were emotionally, academically, or inspirationally: his wife, Tammi, who pushed him daily to continue to work hard and see it through; his parents, Eddie and Jeanette Peasant; his brothers, Terence and Juan, and his sister-in-law, Nicole; his grandmother, Lucy Coleman; his uncles and aunts; his pastor, Dr. Rudolph Overstreet, and the Ebenezer Baptist Church of Mobile, Alabama; his friends, Anthony Gilmore and his wife Lisa, Ayatey Shabazz, Glen Buckalew and his wife Soni; the faculty and staff of Clinton High School in Clinton, Mississippi; his faculty and staff at Gulfport Central Middle School in Gulfport, Mississippi; and all other family members, friends, and individuals who provided support and encouragement throughout his pursuit of this terminal degree.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| ABSTRACT..... | 1 |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | ii |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | iv |
| CHAPTER | |
| I. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| Setting | |
| Statement of the Problem | |
| Purpose of the Study | |
| Statement of Hypotheses | |
| Definitions | |
| Assumptions | |
| Delimitations | |
| Limitation | |
| Justification | |
| II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE..... | 15 |
| Introduction | |
| Factors Leading to the Creation of Ninth Grade Academies | |
| High Dropout Rates | |
| Academic | |
| The Ninth Grade Bulge | |
| Creation of Ninth Grade Academies | |
| Dropout Prevention Program | |
| Summary | |
| III. METHODOLOGY..... | 44 |
| Overview | |
| Participants | |
| Data Collection | |
| Instrumentation | |
| Analysis of Data | |
| IV. ANALYSES OF DATA..... | 51 |
| Introduction | |
| Descriptive Data | |

| | |
|--|----|
| Tests of Hypotheses | |
| V. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... | 61 |
| Summary of Procedures | |
| Summary of Major Findings | |
| Tests of Hypotheses | |
| Conclusions | |
| Discussion | |
| Implications for School Districts | |
| Limitations | |
| Recommendations for Further Research | |
| APPENDIXES..... | 71 |
| REFERENCES..... | 81 |

LIST OF TABLES

Table

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | School Demographics for Gender in Ninth Grade Academies and Traditional High Schools for the 2005—2006 School Year..... | 53 |
| 2. | School Demographics for Ethnicity in Ninth Grade Academies and Traditional High Schools for the 2005—2006 School Year..... | 54 |
| 3. | A Summary of Means and Standard Deviation of Algebra I and Biology I Scores for Ninth Grade Academies and Traditional High Schools..... | 55 |
| 4. | A Summary of Means and Standard Deviation of Scores in Biology I for African American and Caucasian Students..... | 57 |
| 5. | A Summary of Means and Standard Deviation of Scores in Biology I for African American Students..... | 59 |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, school administrators have strived to find solutions for assisting ninth grade students in making a contented transition to high school. The ninth grade year is usually an intricate time as these teenagers attempt to deal with the peak of their adolescent years. Research has shown retention and dropout rates are higher for this grade level than any other grade. Some school administrators have found that these young students are placed in situations, which they are not yet prepared to cope. These situations which may include academic and social challenges of high school and the inability to cope often result in the student dropping out.

The dropout rate is such a critical component and barrier to overcome that it has received national attention and been written into the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This part of the decree is known as the Dropout Prevention Act. The act states:

The purpose of this part is to provide for school dropout prevention and reentry and to raise academic achievement levels by providing grants that (1) challenge all children to attain their highest academic potential; and (2) ensure that all students have substantial and ongoing opportunities to attain their highest academic potential through school wide programs proven effective in school dropout prevention and reentry. (www.ed.gov)

Making a successful transition in high school is now being investigated to curb

the dropout rate in the ninth grade and ensure schools are getting aligned with NCLB.

In order for schools to comply with all of the NCLB expectations, they must find ways to improve annually. "Schools' ability to meet expectations will depend on the tests' instructional sensitivity" (Popham, 2003, p. 11). An article in "Education News Report" said the drop out rate is increasing every year. Popham stated that testing has caused more ninth graders to be retained, which encourage's dropping out. One way that school districts across the United States have worked to combat this problem is by creating ninth grade academies. Students are overwhelmed in the schools where ninth graders are moved into the high school settings, and they are suddenly expected to conform to a higher level of teaching and learning (Chmelynski, 2004). Without the schools looking for alternative methods to curb the dropout rates, states will find themselves with a larger problem. The dropout rate will have a bearing on the future as students who dropped out will have a more difficult time securing a job later in life. These issues have concerned the State Superintendent of Education in Mississippi, Dr. Hank Bounds. He noted:

"...the dropout rate in Mississippi is too high. It is too high in lots of other states too, but it is definitely a tide we must stem in this state if we are going to have a viable workforce and prosperous future. We cannot continue to attract the kind of businesses we want with the kind of jobs we want if we do not have a pool of people who

have basic reading and math skills, a strong work ethic and an ability to be trained with which to fill those jobs.”

(www.mde.k12.ms.us/extrel/news)

Therefore, the state of Mississippi needs to research and employ measures that will begin to reduce its dropout rate quickly.

The state of Mississippi's promotions and non-promotions report in 2004 – 2005 show numbers that support the concern felt by Dr. Bounds for the importance of a good transition from ninth to tenth grade. Table 1 (taken from the State Superintendent's 2004-05 Annual Report) indicates the number of dropouts during the 2003 – 2004 school year for ninth grade students was 1,088. This grade level showed the highest number of dropouts for that year. In 2004 – 2005, that same group of students (which are now in tenth grade) increased to 1,040. In addition the new group of ninth grade students for the 2004 – 2005 school year was 979, making ninth grade the second highest number of dropouts again. Table 1 illustrates this data for all grade levels for the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years.

This proposed study investigated the transition of ninth grade students to high school in the state of Mississippi. The traditional high school encompassed grades nine through 12, whereas a non-traditional high school, in this study, referred to the institution which isolates ninth grade students in a separate building. Some school districts are able to place the ninth grade in a building and on a separate campus; however, other school districts with ninth grade schools, because of the lack of necessary resources, are forced to use a building on the

same campus with the 10-12 high school. The researcher examined the effect ninth grade schools had on student achievement when

Table 1

Dropouts by Grade Level

| Grade | 2003-04 Dropouts | % of Total Enrollment | 2004-05 Dropouts | % of Total Enrollment |
|-------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 7 | 215 | .52 | 255 | .62 |
| 8 | 238 | .62 | 311 | .80 |
| 9 | 1,088 | 2.75 | 979 | 2.44 |
| 10 | 986 | 2.94 | 1,040 | 3.04 |
| 11 | 981 | 3.49 | 922 | 3.20 |
| 12 | 800 | 3.10 | 709 | 2.77 |

Dropout percentages based on first month enrollment.

*Dropouts during the school year. This does not include summer dropouts or withdrawals of students under compulsory school age.

compared to academic development of ninth grade students in the traditional high schools.

This study, more specifically, focuses on the academic achievement of ninth grade students in traditional high schools versus ninth grade students in ninth grade schools or academies. Stimulated by the federal legislation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001), educators and legislators are compelled to measure student achievement and success by standardized test scores. One of six objectives identified by President Clinton and the nation's governors in "Goals

2000 Educate America Act” was to increase the high school graduation rate to 90% (Goals 2000). This goal has not yet been met. The emphasis on school accountability and the mandates of NCLB has led the state of Mississippi to develop the Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) for high school students in the areas of Biology I, Algebra I, English II, and United States History. Students must achieve or exceed the minimal required score on the tests in order to satisfy part of their graduation requirements in the state of Mississippi. The majority of the ninth grade students in the state take the biology and algebra portions of the SATP. All students do not take these tests in the ninth grade; however, high school pupils must pass these assessments before they graduate from senior high school. Because of this measure of high stakes testing accountability, and graduation requirements, the ninth grade year is critical for building a foundation for conquering high school years.

Several school districts in the state of Mississippi have segregated ninth grade students from tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students in their high schools by creating ninth grade schools and academies. These ninth grade schools consist of at least one administrator, a counselor, and a staff of teachers who concentrate solely on the ninth grade students. These school districts believe this separation gives students the attention and nurturing needed to help them understand the rigors of high school. The intent is to diminish or alleviate the distractions of dealing with older students and situations many ninth grade students are not yet mature enough to endure. These school settings seem to

offer the freshman student an opportunity to make a smoother transition to high school as opposed to going directly to the traditional high school setting.

Setting

The concept of ninth grade academies gained popularity after former United States Secretary of State, Richard W. Riley, gave his Annual Back to School Address in September 2000. He recommended school districts create summer academies to assist students in improving academic achievement. This was also an effort to curtail or altogether prevent students from dropping out of high school. In addition, Riley suggested the creation of freshman or ninth grade academies. There are many varieties of ninth grade academies.

The grade configuration of any school district depends upon the needs of the students as determined by the superintendent and school board. However, secondary components all have the same basic characteristics. Some freshman academies are integrated in the junior high school concept that contains seventh through ninth grades. Other academies are entities of the senior high school that includes ninth through twelfth grades. However, most ninth grade academies are located in close proximity of senior high schools. Two models are most commonly used; one houses ninth students in a separate wing of the senior high school while the other model places the freshmen in a building on another campus.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is to determine if academic achievement is higher when ninth grade students attend separate freshman academies or

schools when compared to ninth grade students attending traditional high schools which include grades 9-12.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to determine if there is a significant difference between academic achievement of students who attend ninth grade schools or academies and those who are enrolled in the traditional high school. It was posed as a research question and is essential because it provides educators with data on the most effective secondary grade configuration that may lead to a decrease in high school dropout rates. The specific purposes of this study were as follows:

1. Identify the basic characteristics of the ninth grade students involved in this study.
2. Review related literature to determine what personal characteristics of the freshman students, researched in prior studies, influenced them to drop out of school during their ninth grade year.
3. Review related literature to determine what demographic characteristics of the freshman students, researched in prior studies, influenced them to drop out of school during their ninth grade year.
4. Review related literature to determine what personal characteristics of freshman students, researched in prior studies, encouraged success in school during the ninth grade year.

5. Review related literature to determine what demographic characteristics of the freshman students researched in prior studies, encouraged success in school during their ninth grade year.

A significant difference in academic achievement by students in ninth grade academies or schools could serve as evidence that school districts should consider grade reconfiguration. In essence, school districts may want to incorporate the concept of the freshman academy to promote academic achievement and decrease the dropout rate.

Statement of Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the study are as follows and are tested at the .05 level of significance:

- H₁: There was a significant difference in Algebra I Subject Area Testing Program scores between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools.
- H₂: There was a significant difference in Biology I Subject Area Testing Program scores between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools.

Definitions

Academic achievement – The ability of students to successfully master the required objectives for the grade level which they are enrolled for the designated school year.

Accountability – Each state sets academic standards for what every child should know and learn. Student academic achievement is measured for every child, every year. The results of these annual tests are reported to the public.

(www.ed.gov)

Adolescents – Youth between the ages of 13 – 16.

Class 5A high school – Schools with at least 1,000 students in grades 9 through 12.

Dropout Prevention Act – A part of the No Child Left Behind Act that is provided for school dropout prevention and reentry and to raise academic achievement by specified provisions in the law.

Dropout rate – The percentage of students in grades 9-12 who withdrew from a school in this district during the 2004 – 2005 school year.

(www.greatschools.net/definitions/fl/dropout_district.html)

Freshman Academy – Academic institution housing only ninth grade students. It has its own administrators, counselors, and teachers.

Freshman student (pupil) – A student enrolled in the ninth grade.

Goals 2000 Educate America Act (Goals 2000) – The framework for meeting the National Goals established by this act under the Clinton administration (President Clinton). It does so by promoting coherent, nationwide, systemic education

reform and defining appropriate federal, state, and local roles and responsibilities for education reform and lifelong learning. In short, the Act, by definition, specifies what each level of government must do. It is a "top-down" plan for education reform. The act applies not just to school students, but to parents and everyone else from birth to death.

(uci.net/%7Ebonville/PositionPapers/Goals2000.html)

Grade configuration – The method by which grades are grouped within a school district (i.e. k-5, 6-8, 9, and 10-12). Configuration is based upon the superintendent's and school board's decision on what is best for their students. It also depends on the availability of facilities and resources.

Graduation requirements – The courses set by the state department of education that by completion will allow a student to earn a high school diploma at the end of the senior year of high school.

High stakes testing – A term that is used to describe programs designed to measure not only the achievement of students, but also of teachers, principals, and schools. "High-stakes" also is used to describe assessment tools that can have a variety of consequences. (www.naesp.org)

Junior high school – An academic institution housing any configuration of grades seven through nine.

Ninth Grade Academy – Academic institution housing only ninth grade students. It has its own administrators, counselors, and teachers.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) - Just after the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act became law in

1965. No Child Left Behind is the 21st-century iteration of this first major federal foray into education policy--a realm that is still mainly a state and local function, as envisioned by our Founding Fathers. On Jan. 8, 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110) into law with overwhelming bipartisan support. No Child Left Behind ensures accountability and flexibility as well as increased federal support for education. No Child Left Behind continues the legacy of the Brown v. Board decision by creating an education system that is more inclusive, responsive, and fair. (www.ed.gov)

Non-traditional high school – An academic institution housing students in grades 10 through 12.

Senior high school - An academic institution housing any configuration of grades nine through 12.

Standardized test scores – The student results from the state mandated Subject Area Testing Program and the Mississippi Curriculum Test.

Student achievement - The ability of students to successfully master the required objectives for the grade level which they are enrolled for the designated school year.

SATP (SATP) – The curriculum and assessment required for students by the Mississippi Department of Education to receive a high school diploma. Students are tested at the end of the course in the areas of Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and United States History from 1877.

Traditional high school – An academic institution housing students in grades nine through 12.

Transition – The period which students evolve from eighth grade students into ninth grade students and all of the changes that occur during this phase.

Assumptions

Some general assumptions were made in order to correctly evaluate the outcomes of this study:

1. The researcher assumed school personnel accurately provided the data presented.
2. The researcher assumed students who were included in the data were first time ninth grade pupils.

Delimitations

The delimitations of the study are as follows:

1. The subjects of this study are delimited to pupils who were first-time ninth grade students.
2. The subjects of this study are delimited to pupils who took the Algebra I and Biology I Subject Area Tests in Mississippi schools.
3. The subjects of this study are delimited to pupils who attended schools that are categorized as 5A in the Mississippi school classification system.
4. The subjects of the study are delimited to pupils within ninth grade academies or schools in the state of Mississippi that have been in operation for at least two or more years.
5. The ninth grade academies or schools used in the study are delimited to those that have been in operation for at least two or

more years because these academies will have had the opportunity to become better established and practice effective procedures.

Limitation

The limitation of the study is as follows:

1. The study may not be relative to schools with low enrollment in ninth grade. This study will not be applicable because smaller enrollments will not allow schools to create classes for specific student needs. For instance, it may not be feasible to establish a ninth grade academy if there are not enough students for full classes. Thus the pupil/teacher ratio could be too low, causing a district to lose money.

Justification

As educators continue to search for solutions for the dilemma of elevated dropout rates in today's high schools, it is important that various strategies are investigated. Statistical data and research support theories that suggest ninth grade is a major stumbling block for public school students. Consideration must be given to the development of programs that will aid in improvement of student achievement and success during the transition to high school. Ninth grade students face many issues as they move from middle school to high school. Therefore, from the information in this study, school boards, school districts, and administrators will be able to determine configurations for their cities and communities. This will allow school affiliates to justify meeting the needs of students and allow them to reach academic success upon entering those

transitional grades and times during their academic tenure. The study will also serve as justification for school administrators when requesting school board and community approval to build new facilities or remodel existing structures in order to implement the ninth grade academy concept.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of related literature will outline benefits of ninth grade academies after examining factors that led to the deviation from a traditional high school setting. Some of the following primary factors played an essential role in the creation of ninth grade academies:

- higher dropout rates,
- academic culture,
- low self-esteem,
- poor student/teacher relationships,
- lack of study and organizational skills,
- inability to meet academic expectations of the high school curriculum,
- receiving less personalized attention due to higher enrollment in the traditional high school, and
- the “ninth grade bulge.”

Information from other studies that support the exploration of ninth grade academies is reviewed in this chapter. This literature review will be helpful for school districts, administrators, teachers, parents, and students facing issues that could contribute to students' incompleteness of high school. In addition, the review of related literature will be useful for college and university recruiters as they work with high schools to entice students to enroll. The prolonged existence of colleges and universities often depends on enrollment figures based on pupils.

Factors Leading to the Creation of Ninth Grade Academies

High Dropout Rates

Retention rates have posed the question of whether student achievement is greater in traditional high schools housing students from grades nine to 12 or academies exclusively servicing ninth grade pupils. School administrators have pondered this dilemma over the past years because it is a growing concern. The transition from middle school to high school has been an issue for ninth grade students in school districts all over the country. As students make this transition, many young adolescents experience a larger, more impersonal, competitive, and grade-oriented environment than they experienced in middle school (Eccles, Midgley, & Adler, 1984). These problems have led to an increase in retention and dropout rates for the young adolescents.

School administrators have been concerned with eighth grade students making a successful transition to ninth grade. Kaufman, Alt, and Chapman (2001) cited that more than five percent of all high school students dropout of school each year. Among certain groups, such as low-income students, that number could rise from five to 10 percent. They further state if current rates continue, one in seven children in the United States will not graduate from high school (2001). As evidence of high dropout rates among ninth grade students, one of every three students entering the freshman class in Texas public high schools in 2003-04 left school without graduating, and the dropout rates were highest for Hispanic and African-American students (Honawar, 2004). Because

dropout rates have such an effect on the country, it is being examined on scales beyond local and state departments of education.

The United States Census Bureau suggested, in its household survey report, that high school completion among young adults was approaching 90 percent, which was the goal set by the first national Education Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 1989. As a result of this information, the issue of dropouts became dormant over the last two decades. However, independent researchers and universities investigated the topic further when they found an inconsistency in the official reported dropout rate. Barton (2006) wrote those new findings induced concerns of escalating dropout rates and brought the issue back to the forefront. Barton reported the following five studies found these high school completion rates:

- Jay Greene at the Manhattan Institute 71% in 1998
- Andrew Sum and colleagues at
Northeastern University 68.7% in 1998
- Christopher Swanson and Duncan Chaplin
at the Urban Institute 66.6% in 2000
- Thomas Mortenson of Post-secondary
Education Opportunity 66.1% in 2000
- Walter Haney and colleagues at
Boston College 74.4% in 2001

These contradictions of official dropout rates led to a “political explosion” after accuracy in each state’s report to the Department of Education were

attacked by the Education Trust in 2003. Rod Paige, Secretary of Education at that time, appointed a task force to explore the matter. The purpose of the task force was to devise a plan detailing how states could develop a premium high school graduation scale (Barton, 2006). Because dropout rates were pushed to the forefront of concern, closer attention was being paid to contributing factors. Some researchers have found a correlation between particular ethnic groups and high numbers when studying dropout rates.

According to Burka (2004) a San Antonio research group says that the statewide class of 2001 in Texas lost 40 percent of its members between the ninth and twelfth grades. They also investigated the percentage of Texans of recent high school age (18-24) who did not have a high school diploma. The United States Census Bureau reports that figure at 29.3 percent.

It was noted earlier by Honawar (2004) that dropout rates were highest among Hispanic and African-American students. Other studies found similar evidence that minorities have lower completion rates than Whites. Barton used Elaine Allensworth's study, completed in 2005. She conducted a study sampling Chicago schools and discovered that among boys, only 39 percent of African-American students graduated by age 19, compared with 51 percent of Latino students and 58 percent of white students. The rates among girls were better with 57 percent of African-American students graduating compared to 65 percent for Latino students and 71 percent for Caucasian students.

Authors associated with the Business Roundtable make a strong case that 30 percent of America's adolescents never meet the requirements for graduation

from high school. Of that percentage, the authors report the dropout rate is higher for males, African Americans, Hispanics and inner city residents. These authors report there has not been an improvement in two decades, and it seems to be worsening. They report a dropout range of 45 percent and 44 percent in Arizona and Mississippi to Vermont's 15 percent and Nebraska's 17 percent. To further clarify the impact the dropout rate has on the country, the researchers point out the difference in lifetime earnings between a man with a high school diploma and one without--\$450,000. (Ingram, 2004)

At Johnston High School in Austin, Texas, the freshman class averages 750 students. According to past experience, only 250 of those students will graduate with their class. There are approximately 100 freshmen in the magnet program. Presumably, almost all of the 100 freshmen will graduate. This means that of the remaining 650 or so students in the class—those who live in the Johnston High School boundaries, almost all of them Hispanic or black—fewer than 150 will graduate with their peers. If these predictions are accurate, the dropout rate at Johnston High School will be 67 percent. (Burka, 2004) While students have no control over their ethnicity, and in some cases a learning disability, there are still other factors hindering their progress toward the completion of high school.

A separate study also found ninth grade to be a critical component in the education pipeline and is closing for many students, especially minority students. The study concluded ninth grade African-American males fared worse with completing requirements for graduation. Walter Haney, who is responsible for

this study, noted that those who fail to graduate are “far more likely to end up in prison” (1999, pg. 42). While race is one subgroup of high dropout rates, some adolescents have additional attributes, such as learning disabilities, that can affect them completing high school.

Students with learning disabilities who are transitioning into high school are presented with far greater challenges (Letrello & Miles, 2003). “A crisis often develops when the student enters high school because the students’ compensating efforts are no longer adequate.” (pg. 22) However, it is important to note students who struggle with learning are not the only individuals considered as special education pupils. The gifted student also belongs to this category.

Gifted students present challenges at the ninth grade level also. It cannot be assumed that because they have a propensity to master concepts faster they will not be as likely to dropout. Brough, Bergmann, and Holt (2006) wrote in their book *Teach Me I Dare You* that students at the gifted level, especially those not yet identified or challenged in school, are as much at risk as those with academic difficulties. The gifted student may not realize his or her own aptitude unless some content sparks an interest or becomes noticed. In addition, these students may not have parents who understand giftedness and have low expectations. However, there is still a more evident risk for the student who has a true learning disability because of the incapacity to attain skills.

Wagner (1989) found that the school programs for students with disabilities in the ninth and tenth grades were strenuous. The heavy load of

academic requirements causes students with disabilities to be more likely to experience problems. The problems with students receiving failing grades arise because of three main factors: 1) the intense academic focus in high school, 2) the predominance of regular education placements, and 3) the lower level of support services provided. Poor grades cause students with disabilities to fall behind their peers and lengthen their advancement toward graduation. Marder (1992) reported that students with learning disabilities have a dropout rate of 30 percent, one of the highest for students with disabilities.

Academic Culture

Many factors which contribute to the high dropout rate among ninth grade students include more advanced expectations, in-depth homework assignments and additional academic and extracurricular choices. Middle school experts Lounsbury and Johnston (1985) conducted an extensive study of ninth grade across the United States. Nearly 20 years ago, they discovered a disturbing discrepancy between school policies and practices and the developmental needs of 14-year-old students. Their probe found instruction was teacher-centered, with teachers lecturing and students taking notes and completing assignments. Forty to 50-minute classes, ability grouping and tracking were also common practices in ninth grade settings. Lounsbury and Johnston (1985) also cited high schools were lacking in the level of guidance provided for ninth grade students to help them adjust academically and socially. Based on findings of these researchers, they predicted the ninth grade would “continue to drift” and “mirror the worst of

outmoded high school practices that do little to foster positive learning for all students.”

A study of high school reform by Wheelock (1993) proved similar problems with ninth grade students. Students who become disengaged, discouraged, and who are unable to develop strong bonds with teachers are most vulnerable to failure. In addition, other factors such as tedious lessons, overcrowded classrooms, and indifferent teachers were also contributors to students being unsuccessful in the ninth grade.

The inability to meet academic expectations can also lead to an increase in dropout rates. For example, students at risk for school failure report that their schoolwork is “too difficult” and that they lack the skills needed to complete homework (Crist, 1991). An investigation conducted by Stanley, Slate, and Jones (1999) tracks study skills in a sample of 255 ninth grade students in the Honors and College Prep classes at a southeastern high school. They had participants complete a true-false Study Habits Inventory that consisted of 58 items. The inventory was designed to explore various study habits and note-taking behaviors. The three areas of weaknesses detected were: (a) failure to recopy lecture notes soon after class, (b) failure to use any special method for learning new terms, and (c) waiting until the last minute to study for tests. The results also indicated that students frequently read several pages of text without knowing what they had read, and they also seldom utilized advanced organizers, charts, or diagrams to focus their reading and reviewing. Another factor associated with academics and the dropout rate is difficulty of selecting appropriate classes.

In an environment with many academic choices to be made, students develop an unenthusiastic attitude towards high school and fail to remember the importance of graduating and receiving a high school diploma. “Many adolescents develop a more negative view of themselves than they had in middle school; they feel less competent to handle the academic and social demands of school.” (Hertzog, Morgan, Diamond, & Walker, pg. 7) Because many students must independently devise a schedule of classes, the lack of guidance by teachers to assist learners in making astute academic choices leads to the incompleteness of high school.

Many ninth grade students struggle with the transition from middle school because of higher expectations from teachers, more homework, and the freedom of selecting the most appropriate classes and activities that will prepare them for life upon exiting high school. Reyes, Gillock, Kobus, and Sanchez further indicated they needed to know more about high school, the classes that would have to be taken, directions for finding their way through the building, and locating classes in the new setting. Furthermore, students need to understand the details of how classes are planned and become knowledgeable about academic and graduation requirements. If challenges arise, students need information regarding resources to assist them in their need to solve problems and issues (Reyes, Gillock, Kobus, & Sanchez, 2000).

Mizelle notes “Choosing to take a particular section of Algebra I may track a student into the general curriculum when he or she intended to enter the college preparatory curriculum.” (pg. 57) Students are faced with making

decisions about which classes to enroll before they have determined a career path beyond high school. This could mean pupils need more college preparatory classes or seek vocational courses to provide them training before entering the work force after graduating from high school. In addition, the determination of extracurricular activities can also be critical because participation in these classes can sometimes earn students scholarships.

Isakson and Jarvis (1999) found a decline in the participation of school activities is often observed. This study, that surveyed ninth grade students, indicated participating in school activities was helpful (1999). Findings by Fulk (2003) also supported Isakson and Jarvis. She indicated that students who participate in school activities come to identify with and value the school's mission and culture. Students who do not participate in school activities begin to feel alienated and marginalized. However, finding a balance between time and courses required can lead to frustration, self-doubt, and loss of interest in school.

The Ninth Grade Bulge

Barton mentions the trend of a ninth grade growth or bulge that has developed over the last decade. He states, an increasing number of ninth graders are failing to be promoted to the tenth grade (2006). Haney and colleagues (2004) found that in 2001, 440,000 more students were enrolled in grade nine than in grade eight the previous year. They believe there is an association between failing a grade and dropping out of school.

According to Debra Viadero (2004), this "bulge" is the term education researchers give to a percentage increase in ninth grade students over the

number of pupils who are enrolled in eighth grade. Over the same period, statistics show that growing numbers of students seem to be disappearing between ninth and tenth grades. Researchers attribute those trends to the rising use of standardized exams, stiffer course requirements for graduation, and, more recently, the growth of "high stakes" accountability programs. In the face of those developments, they say, schools are retaining students in ninth grade — and, in some cases, derailing them from the path to a regular high school diploma. Such changes, together with more recent declines in high school graduation rates, signal a "real national emergency." Though few studies have documented the extent of the growth of the 9th grade bulge, educators have long recognized the year as a pivotal transition point for students.

In a 112,000-student Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C. school system, for instance, a school watchdog group flagged a 29 percent bulge among ninth grade students as early as 2002. Local school officials said at the time numbers had ballooned because the district had enacted tougher high school promotion requirements. In an effort to incorporate extra safety nets, Charlotte-Mecklenburg school leaders have since initiated ninth grade "academies," an extended "freshman focus" period, tutorial programs, and career-planning help for ninth grade students. Nationwide, Viadero stated, ninth grade enrollment bulges had grown in all but three states: Arkansas, Louisiana, and Maine. In 12 states, the percentage of "extra" students in ninth grade was 15 percent or more. Across the country, the report says, the bulge has grown from four percent in 1970 to 13 percent in 2000.

A 30-year study conducted by Haney, et al. (2004) shows the percentage of increase or decrease, from the previous grade in the previous year, in the number of students across the nation enrolled in the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades in the school year 1969-1970 compared to the school year 2000-2001. The information supports the increase in ninth grade enrollment when percentages are compared to eighth and tenth grade enrollment. In 1970, eighth grade enrollment was one percent less than in 1969 while tenth grade enrollment was two and nine tenths lower than the previous year. The ninth grade enrollment increased four and three tenths during the same period. In 2001, eighth and tenth grade student counts decreased by three tenths and 11.4 percent, respectively, while there were 13.2 percent more ninth grade students in the same period.

In the "Goals 2000 Educate America Act," one of six objectives identified by President Clinton and the nation's government was to increase the high school graduation rate to 90% (Goals 2000). The year 2000 has come and six years have passed, but this goal has yet to be accomplished. Concerns about the academic performance of American secondary school students are resulting reforms which focus on high standards, accountability, and high-stakes assessments according to Fulk (2003). Researchers argue that this is the cause of too little attention being focused on the academic skills required for success in today's schools (Stanley, Slate & Jones, 1999). Some literature supports academic study skills instruction for all students, including students with identified disabilities (Boyle & Weishaar, 2001; Deshler et al., 2001), those at-risk for failure

(Burke, 2002), and those considered to be above average to high achievers (Stanley, Slate & Jones, 1999).

Zigmond argues that ninth grade is the crucial year for students with learning disabilities. In the ninth grade, students must earn passing grades in core courses (i.e., English, biology, social studies, and math) that carry credits required for graduation. At the same time, ninth grade students are faced with increased demands both in terms of independent study skills (Reith & Polsgrove, 1994) and in the amount of content covered in each class. Some students who are at-risk for failure may have advanced through earlier grades due to individual teacher attention and vigilant monitoring that may not be possible or desirable within the larger secondary school culture (Fulk, 2003).

Reinhard (1997) refers to ninth grade as the “make or break” year in terms of secondary school success or failure. He further explains that students who fail their classes are likely to: (a) begin questioning their ability to make graduation requirements, (b) lose interest in school, and (c) consequently drop out of high school (Wagner, 1989). Catterall (1998) listed the three most common reasons students give for dropping out as: (a) not liking school, (b) not getting along with teachers and others, and (c) failing.

Research by Jay Hertzog and Lena Morgan (1998) indicates that about 25 percent of freshman students who fail the ninth grade will not graduate. Further studies find some schools exceed that average with as many as 45 percent of ninth grade students failing, thus creating a “holding tank for high schools.” Black (2004) explains that a school district which accepts 1,000 students into ninth

grade with 45 percent of them failing at the end of the year, for example, will cause the subsequent ninth grade class enrollment to climb to 1,450 students with the 10th grade class dwindling to 550 students. Many of these 1,450 ninth grade students will end up in either the alternative school or dropping out of school for good.

In a report of the Pittsburgh School District, Chute (1999) confirms the studies of the “bulging ninth grade.” The 1997-98 district records show the following statistics:

- Almost a quarter of ninth grade students (23 percent) do not pass enough courses to be promoted to the 10th grade.
- Only 78 percent of ninth grade students attend school regularly, compared with 92.5 percent in first grade, 86.3 in eighth grade, and 80.9 percent in 12th grade.
- Ninth grade students are almost five times as likely to receive failing grades (26 percent) as eighth grade students (six percent).
- Numbers of over-aged students are highest in ninth grade. Nearly 14 percent of ninth grade students are 16.5 years old or older by the end of the school year.

Black (2004) found that traditional high schools which included grades nine through twelve present the greatest problems for adolescents. The transition from middle school to high school presents major challenges for ninth grade students. Black (2004) states many of these teenagers “find themselves struggling to navigate large, impersonal, competitive environments—far different

from their more comfortable middle schools.” (pg. 43) Although some students make a smooth transition, many of them get overwhelmed by the larger high school hallways, complex schedules, and demanding course requirements. Mizelle (1995) interviewed some ninth grade students who stated that the high aspirations with which they entered ninth grade were lost along with their self-confidence after receiving the first report card. The students admitted ninth grade was much more difficult and demanding than they thought. As the problem of transitioning from middle school to high school persisted across the United States, educators have explored many programs to improve this important yet delicate time for adolescents.

Creation of Ninth Grade Academies

In the 1960s, concerns about providing a more supportive environment for early adolescents fueled the middle school movement, which advocated replacing junior high schools serving grades 7-9 with middle schools comprising grades 6-8. The number of middle schools has mushroomed from 3,916 to 10,205 over the past 20 years, according to the United States Department of Education. That transformation shifted most ninth grade students from junior highs to high schools. However, with many students struggling to make the transition, some educators are second-guessing the wisdom of subjecting 14-year-olds to the more intense academic and peer pressures of high school.

Over the years, the challenge of helping 14-year-olds reach academic success continued to be an issue. During the mid-1990s, high schools were rampant with crises that included a 70 percent attendance rate, student apathy

and unruliness, and high numbers of academic failures. Administrators and teachers began to rethink the design of high schools that encompassed ninth through 12th grade students. One approach school personnel considered to combat these problems was the school-within-a-school concept. While ninth grade students are housed in the high school building, they are detached from 10th through 12th grade students. The ninth grade school is designed with interdisciplinary team teaching, block scheduling, and curriculum and instruction focusing on core academic subjects. (Black, 2004)

Houston County High School, located in Georgia, created a special program for ninth grade students to aid them in successfully making the transition from middle school to high school. The school was plagued with such problems as high discipline referrals and grade retention. In a school with a population of 2,200 students, ninth grade pupils accounted for more than 60% of the discipline referrals. Six years after creation of the program, the ninth grade discipline incidents were down 55% and grade retentions decreased 46% says Chmelynski (2004).

During the first five years of the Houston County Ninth Grade Academy, students were housed in a separate wing of the high school. In the sixth year, the academy was moved into its own building. School administrators and counselors created an elective class which they called High School 101. The curriculum for this course consisted of time management, decision-making skills, study strategies, test-taking tactics, learning styles, social tolerance, computer research proficiency and career alignment.

Freshman academies have been used in the Philadelphia school system over the past several years. The academies are part of the Talent Development initiative. School officials have reported a 41% decrease in suspensions and a 50% decline in arrests at schools where freshman academies were a part of the transitional concept. By year five of the initiative, all 54 high schools within Philadelphia's school system had ninth-grade academies because of overwhelming success from the incorporation based on this transition technique. (Chmelynski, 2004)

The curriculum for the ninth-grade academy curriculum included two classes each of English and math instruction along with study skills and comprehension classes. The purpose of the academy was to make sure students succeeded in high school according to Chmelynski (2004). This preparation is essential because students who are academically at risk at this stage were probably already there before they entered ninth grade.

It was noted by Brough, Bergmann, and Holt (2006) that students who lacked foundational basic academic skills in reading, math, and writing become more at risk of failure as the level of content material and expectations increase. These authors note some students develop complex coping skills and are passed from grade to grade by a thin margin. They wrote some of the students who are at risk are not recognized or identified until it is too late. Others attend remediation classes and programs and try to obtain the skills necessary to do the school work. This situation becomes a challenge for teachers to meet the needs of students with such learning challenges. Teachers were willing to try different

approaches to ensure students would not get lost in the system, thereby possibly dropping out of school. One school in Tennessee was ready to conquer the issue.

The ninth-grade academy concept was launched at Chattanooga Central High School, located in Harrison, Tennessee, in 2003. They wanted to create a nurturing program that would enable ninth-graders to acclimate to high school with less pressure from older students, according to school officials. The program was also focused on providing more opportunities for teachers to interact with students in order to assess their needs and help them learn. The Tennessee school reported a drop in suspensions from 29.4% to 17.8% during the first year of the academy. (Chmelynski, 2004)

Albany High School, which is located in the state of New York, was in the second year of its ninth-grade academy, Chmelynski reported. The academy was housed on the entire third floor of the high school. Administrators of the 2600-student school found that the separation allowed the pupils to more easily learn the building and the teachers to better know the freshmen class (2004).

During the 1999-2000 school year, Dudley High School in Greensboro, North Carolina decided to experiment with a ninth-grade academy. They took the 100 most academically challenged ninth grade students and isolated them in the academy. They found that retention and discipline problems decreased while academic achievement increased. As a result of the success in the first year, they expanded the academy to include all ninth grade students except those enrolled in the early college program. Professional development was provided for

the ninth-grade academy teachers at North Carolina A & T State University. The curriculum for the program included double classes of English and math, study skills and ninth grade survival tips. (Chmelynski, 2004)

A Midwestern high school took a slightly different approach for combating transition problems as they pertain to ninth grade students. The administrators at this school developed a three phase project with which they surveyed students and assessed their academic abilities in phases one and two. In phase three of the project, they identified students who showed weaknesses in the areas of time management, motivation, and homework and addressed these weaknesses by placing the students in smaller homerooms. This setting was known as the “Freshman Academy” where they received instruction in study skills and strategies for organization (Fulk, 2003).

Two large urban high schools experimented with a program to test the effectiveness of a set of reforms aimed at improving ninth grade students’ attendance and academic performance (Quint, Miller, Pastor & Cytron, 1999). Pulaski High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin implemented the program during the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 school years and Schlagle High School in Kansas City, Kansas embarked on their program during the 1996-1997 school year.

The program, Project Transition, was organized with three strategies and a purpose to develop a more nurturing environment for ninth grade students and their teachers. The first strategy involved the establishment of teams which consisted of four core academic teachers on each, with approximately 120 students who rotated through these classes. The second strategy required the

teachers from each team to collaborate on a daily basis to discuss professional development and solutions to student problems. The third strategy necessitated a coach to support the teachers' professional development and attempts to improve instruction in ninth grade classes. The coach served as a "non-supervisory peer" for the teachers. The key function of this person was to improve their professional growth including one-on-one assistance. According to Quint et al.,

Program developers expected these changes to alter students' and teachers' attitudes and behavior in ways that would help students make a successful transition from middle school to high school and ultimately improve their attendance and performance. (1999, p. 3)

Quint et al. (1999) reported that Project Transition was successful in improving the environment of the school for ninth grade students and their teachers. Student relationships with other classmates improved at Pulaski High School, while student relationships with teachers improved at Schlagle High School. "The academic outcomes of students showed a positive, but unpretentious improvement as a result of Project Transition." (p. 12)

Mizelle (1995) did further research on the middle school environment and found that students had a more successful transition when they stayed together using the cohort concept. Their success was heightened because they remained with the same teachers through sixth, seventh, and eighth grades where they experienced more hands-on, life-related learning activities, integrated instruction, and cooperative learning groups. Mizelle noticed these students were more

successful than students from the same school who had a more traditional middle school experience.

Oates and her colleagues (1998) researched a similar program, Community for Learning Program (CFL), at Sunrise Middle School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Their investigation concluded that the CFL program participants had a higher success rate in their transition to high school than students who had not participated in the program. The CFL program was based on the following three components: (1) support and training for teachers, (2) a learning management system designed to help middle school students develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning and behavior, and (3) an emphasis on community and family involvement.

Gladston, a midsized midwestern city, received what is believed to be “one of the largest gifts ever offered to a single public school” in 1997. According to Holland and Mazzoli (2001), the leaders of an industrial corporation pledged \$10 million to rebuild an urban high school which had been faced with problems. School leaders seized this opportunity to revamp the school by forming a series of academies which would focus on a variety of career paths from which students could choose.

The core of the series academies would be a school facility designed for freshman students. This segment of the school was designed to help ninth grade students make a smooth transition from middle school to high school. The objective was to provide academic and emotional supports to allow the “urban students” to rise to a level of expectation that would be competitive with the best

of their peers. The initial stage of the freshman academy, in the 1999-2000 school year, was scheduled to house approximately one-third of the ninth grade students from the school district. Holland and Mazzoli state that eventually, all freshmen would attend the academy before entering tenth grade.

The ninth grade school operated in two sessions—one in the morning and another in the afternoon—and students would attend the regular school during the other half of the academic day. The freshman academy faculty focused on developing ways to keep potential drop out students involved in the learning process. Teachers created assignments and tests which allowed students to experience success and achieve the higher standards of learning placed upon them (Holland & Mazzoli, 2001).

The United States Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics reported that during the 1999-2000 school year, 128 ninth-grade only schools were operating, according to Reents (2002). The Aldine Independent School District in Houston, Texas, which has an enrollment of approximately 53,000 students, operates four ninth-grade centers. The high schools range in size from 1,900 to 2,300 students in grades 10 through 12, while the ninth-grade schools average about 850 students. The district places these schools on isolated campuses to allow ninth grade students to become better acquainted with the "rigors" of the high school curriculum. This would also allow the students to mature for a year without the influence of the upper classmen.

The Aldine Independent School District experienced immediate success with their ninth-grade centers. There was a dramatic decrease in the dropout rate and an increase in the attendance rates says Reents (2002). Fewer students failed ninth grade by earning more credits to be classified as true tenth grade students when they enrolled at the high school. Most rewarding for the school were the improved test scores of ninth grade pupils and improved behavior. The Aldine Independent School District earned the second high rating from a Texas Education Agency for the state system of accountability. Reents (2002) states "this is based on student performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, dropout rates and attendance.

Mac Iver (1990) found fewer students were retained in ninth grade when they experienced a high school transition program which contained several diverse expression activities. Hertzog and Morgan (1999) conducted a study of 56 high schools in Georgia and Florida which confirmed schools with extensive transition programs have significantly lower failure and dropout rates than schools that provide students few expression activities. Mac Iver, Hertzog and Morgan concluded that the best transition programs included a variety of activities-in particular, counseling, school visits, and special summer courses to help students understand their new school. Furthermore, it is of critical importance that there are practices in place at the middle school to assist students in the transition to the ninth grade.

Starkman, Scales, and Roberts (1999) found consistent data which proved that there is a strong relationship between academic success and social

competence and ability of students to adapt to various environments. Ninth grade schools must be able to provide an atmosphere of emotional caring along with intellectual challenge (Starkman et al.). This leads some researchers to conclude that student progress on social competence, even more than intellectual measures, could be the best primary measure of academic success, according to Starkman et al.

Dropout Prevention Program

Proper guidance for students entering the ninth grade is essential and can curb the dropout rate significantly. Beth Reinhard (1997) describes ninth grade as “a fragile and confusing time for young people.” (pg. 1) She explained how the Detroit School District approached their dropout quandary. The tactic was to use key community members such as an attendance officer and social worker.

Attendance officer, Derrick Howze, grew up in the “gritty” neighborhood and was familiar with places where truant students would go to hide. He would cruise the streets and find students avoiding school, loitering at fast-food restaurants. In some cases, Officer Howze would have to make home visits and literally drag students out of bed. Once in his custody, students were hauled into classes. Students needing such extreme measures of guidance were usually not compliant because they were forced to attend school. Support services needed to be in place to ensure routine attendance could be maintained.

Social worker, Lisa Smith, described as having a “sympathetic smile” which endears her to the troubled ninth graders, organizes rap sessions to discuss teenage issues. Such issues included sex, drugs, violence, and family

problems. These sessions gave students an opportunity to express their thoughts and questions regarding these topics. Breaking through such emotional topics provided students with a sounding board that led to solutions that began influencing students to stay in school.

The spirited partnership of Officer Howze and Lisa Smith is part of a three-year-old district-wide initiative in the Detroit Schools that aims to curtail its 25 percent dropout rate by concentrating on ninth grade students. To meet the district's requirements, Kettering High School's ninth grade students study a basic curriculum and attend most of their classes in one wing of the building, along with the guidance from Officer Howze and Mrs. Smith. This partition kept ninth grade students away from the influences of upper classmen of the high school. (Reinhard, 1997)

The High Schools that Work website presents some components of an effective transition program:

- Continuous planning with teacher involvement. Many schools use study teams of teachers and school leaders to plan and revise their transition programs. These teams should focus on using data to understand students' deficiencies and on initiating proven practices to close achievement gaps.
- Working together to bridge communication gaps. Transition programs involve middle grades and high school leaders and teachers paying attention to instruction and working together to bridge communication gaps from one school to another.

- High expectations for students who are performing below grade level. Successful schools set high standards, upgrade the curriculum and expect all students to do at least grade-level work.
- Beyond drill sheets – engaging students in challenging and meaningful assignments. Successful schools have learned that students' assignments must be challenging, meaningful and engaging. These assignments require more teacher planning and greater use of real world problems and lessons that teach academic knowledge and skills.
- Extra help and extra time to meet high standards. Teachers at effective schools make it known that they believe students can do high-level work; students at these schools believe their teachers will be available to help them meet high standards.
- Telling students and the community the truth. Many schools tell parents the truth about the level of effort the school and the students will have to make to get the students to meet at least grade-level standards.
- Flexible scheduling. Some students may need longer blocks of time to master rigorous content. Successful schools see a flexible schedule as a resource and take steps to give more quality learning time.

Walsh (2002) discussed some “keys to success” of the ninth grade school in the Alexandria City Public School District in Alexandria, Virginia. Minnie Howard School, the school for freshmen students, was named as one of the only two “high flying” secondary schools in the metropolitan Washington area,

reported Walsh. This distinction is given only to schools with more than 50 percent minority enrollment, more than 50 percent of students receiving free or reduced priced school meals or both and yet whose students achieve standardized test scores at or above the 70 percentile. The keys to creating this kind of success in a school with the above demographics, Walsh (2002) states, are “maintaining a consistent, talented staff, holding high expectations for adults and students, providing support at every juncture and listening to the children.”

One approach incorporated at Minnie Howard Ninth Grade School was the creation of a teacher-advisor component. Although the teachers regarded this task as an extra duty, the administrators worked to persuade them of the advantages of this concept. They asked the teachers to do two things—teach the kids well and get to know them and their families through the advisory period. During this period, the administrators took care of other duties such as hall duty, bus duty, cafeteria duty and detention. After the teachers were relieved of these responsibilities, they embraced the trade-off. (Walsh, 2002)

The next key to the success of the Minnie Howard School was the elimination of in-school suspension. Because of the lack of evidence of improved student behavior or achievement through in-school suspension programs, the administrators decided to use a different approach. They developed a behavioral plan based on the “four Cs: commitment, compassion, conversation and consequences.” (pg. 22) The teachers were asked to work through the first three Cs, and the administrative team would guarantee the consequences. There was a 10 percent improvement in out-of-class referrals for the school district’s ninth

grade students compared to a few years before the creation of Minnie Howard School (2002).

Another key to the success of Alexandria City School District's ninth grade school is the equalization of class sizes, level of students and number of classes among all teachers. Walsh (2002) remarks, "over time, this has led to smaller class sizes, innovative mainstream recovery programs, high-quality instruction for all students and a democracy among staff that puts new teachers and veterans in the comfort zone of equality." Not only does this concept model equal opportunity and equally high expectations for all, to the students, but it also allows the staff members to become experts in their content areas and improve ability to teach to different learning styles. (Walsh, 2002)

The institution of a school support team is instrumental in the development of a successful ninth grade transitional school. An ideal student support team would include school counselors, social workers, a school nurse, the alternative programs coordinator, a school psychologist and administrators, according to Walsh (2002). At Minnie Howard Ninth Grade School, this team met to discuss students referred as needing assistance. Children who are at-risk are assigned to a case manager who monitors their academic progress, attendance, self-esteem and social development. This process is the final component to increasing the success of ninth grade students making the transition into high school. The retention and graduation rates in the Alexandria City School District have continued to improve since the inception of the ninth grade school (2002).

Summary

From the related literature, it is evident there is a growing concern for the prevention of students dropping out of school. Lawmakers, school officials, and parents are all searching for methods and strategies to keep students in school. The goal is to help the youth obtain a high school diploma and be prepared to enter the workforce.

While the answer may not completely lie in ninth grade academies, they are showing a good indication that they stand out in methods and strategies to try. The studies and articles outlined in this chapter attest to that statement. This study will examine what others have investigated. Again, the data will be useful for administrators, teachers, school districts, and all other stakeholders in the educational realm.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides in depth information on who the subjects of this study are and how they were selected, the method by which data were collected, descriptions of the data, instruments which were used, and how the data were applied and analyzed. There was a procedural method for conducting the study. This study compared ninth grade students enrolled in traditional ninth through twelfth grade schools with those attending ninth grade schools or academies.

Overview

This quantitative study was used to assess statistical differences between ninth grade schools or academies to traditional high schools containing grades nine through twelve. The study was devised to determine the effectiveness of ninth grade schools or academies based on academic achievement. Achievement was based on students' performance on the Algebra I and Biology I Subject Area Tests.

Participants

One group of participants in this study consisted of first-time ninth grade students who attend traditional high schools containing grades nine through 12. The second group consisted of first-time freshman students who are enrolled in ninth grade schools or academies. The participants were enrolled in Biology I and / or Algebra I and have taken the Subject Area Test for these courses. Ninth grade students from traditional high schools were randomly selected, for

validity of the test results, with ninth grade students from ninth grade schools or academies.

Six schools were used in this study. The ninth grade schools were selected from three regions, northern, central, and southern, of the state of Mississippi. The schools are classified as 5A, schools with an enrollment of 1,000 or more students in grades nine through twelve including the 10-12 high school enrollment. The traditional high schools identified in the study were selected from regions of Mississippi, north, central, and south. These schools are also classified as 5A and have comparable demographics to the identified ninth grade schools in the study. The identified schools tested a minimum of 75 students in Biology I and also in Algebra I using the Mississippi SATP (SATP). In order for students to be eligible for a high school diploma, Algebra I and Biology I subject area tests must be passed.

The ninth grade schools identified in this study are located in a separate building on a remote site from the 10-12 high school. Each school has at least 350 students enrolled. The faculty and staff consist of a principal, an assistant principal, counselor, library media specialist, and a full staff of teachers. Each school uses a form of block scheduling consisting of core academic and elective classes. Advanced Placement courses as well as special education programs are offered at the identified schools. All three ninth grade schools offer extracurricular activities including band, choir, clubs, and all high school sports.

The traditional high schools identified in this study contain grades nine through twelve, all within the same facility. Each school has at least 350 students

enrolled in ninth grade. The faculty and staff consist of a principal, three assistant principals, at least four counselors, a library media specialist, and a full staff of teachers. Each school uses a form of block scheduling consisting of core academic and elective classes. Advanced Placement courses, as well as special education programs, are offered at the identified schools. All three traditional high schools offer extracurricular activities including band, choir, clubs, and all high school sports. Ninth grade students are integrated into some academic and elective classes and extracurricular activities with tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students at these traditional high schools.

The Mississippi SATP is used to test ninth grade students taking Algebra I and/or Biology I at the end of the course. A committee of distinguished educators creates the Subject Area Test assessments. The process began with the selection of representative committees of exemplary teachers for each of the four subject areas (Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and U.S. History from 1877). Mississippi district superintendents were asked to nominate their most exemplary teacher(s) in each of these subjects, and nominees were then asked to detail accomplishments and experience. From this nominee pool, the Mississippi Department of Education selected members for each committee (approximately 30 teachers each) to maximize overall excellence as well as representation by congressional district, district accreditation level, and ethnic categories. Once selected, the teacher committees directly participated in all phases of test development. (p. 2)

The Algebra I test is described by the Mississippi Department of Education as follows:

The Algebra I Subject Area Test measures a student's knowledge of and skill level in applied algebra. The test consists of 65 multiple-choice items. Many multiple-choice items contain charts, graphs, or diagrams that the student will use to determine the correct answer. Questions from the following assessment strands are distributed throughout the test: Patterns, Relations, and Functions; Equations and Inequalities; Polynomials; Formulas in Problem Solving; Slope; and Probability. (www.mde.k12.ms.us)

The Biology I assessment is described by the Mississippi Department of Education as follows:

The Biology I Subject Area Test measures a student's knowledge of basic biological concepts, the use of science skills, and the application of biology to real-world problem solving and decision-making. Students will interpret data, apply concepts, draw conclusions, and explain their own ideas. The test consists of 89 multiple-choice items, which may include charts, diagrams, or graphs. Questions from the following assessment strands are distributed throughout the test: Chemical Basis of Life; The Cell; Genetics and the Molecular Basis of Heredity; Natural Selection and Diversity; Ecology; and Nature of Science. (www.mde.k12.ms.us)

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, application (Appendix A) and approval to conduct research was obtained from both the doctoral committee and the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (Appendix B). Data collection consisted of the following steps:

1. The six schools were contacted to identify the site test coordinator responsible for test data.
2. A letter describing the study was sent to school officials of six identified school districts in the state of Mississippi. The letter requested the following information:
 - Consent to use ninth grade student data from the 2004-2005 SATP
 - Ninth grade enrollment
 - Number of ninth grade students tested in Algebra I
 - Number of ninth grade students tested in Biology I
 - Scores from 2005-2006 Algebra I SATP for each tested ninth grade student (excluding names and identification numbers) with ethnicity and gender
 - Scores from 2005-2006 Biology I SATP for each tested ninth grade student (excluding names and identification numbers) with ethnicity and gender
3. The letter was mailed after approval from the Institutional Review Board was granted.
4. The letter requested a return date of two weeks after receipt of the letter.

Instrumentation

Student data from the SATP in Algebra I and Biology I was obtained from identified school districts. SATP Algebra I and Biology I test results were used to compare student achievement at ninth grade schools to that of ninth grade pupils at traditional high schools.

Four primary variables were identified in this study. The variables were the Algebra I Subject Area Test and the Biology I Subject Area Test. Other variables identified in this study included students' ethnicity and gender. The total number of 50 subjects for each SATP was used from each of the identified schools for a grand total of 300 to 400 subjects. These subjects were randomly selected from the data collected from the schools. All data were entered into the SPSS program.

Analysis of Data

An independent t-test was performed to determine if there is a statistically significant difference in achievement between students attending ninth grade schools and that of pupils enrolled in traditional high schools containing ninth through twelfth grades at the .05 alpha level. Specific techniques as related to testing each hypothesis were as follows:

H₁: There was a significant difference in Algebra I Subject Area Testing Program scores between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools.

H₂: There was a significant difference in Biology I Subject Area Testing Program scores between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools.

The data determined the effectiveness of ninth grade schools and academies. The results are discussed in Chapters IV (results) and V (conclusions) of this document.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSES OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter presents descriptive analyses as well as quantitative findings on the data gathered from the test scores of ninth grade students in ninth grade schools and in traditional high schools in the state of Mississippi. The data include test scores from the Algebra I and Biology I SATP. The data also include gender and ethnicity of ninth grade students used in this study.

The following research questions were used to guide the experiment in this study:

1. There is a significant difference in Algebra I Subject Area Testing Program scores between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools.
2. There is a significant difference in Biology I Subject Area Testing Program scores between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools.

Descriptive Data

The population for the study consisted of ninth grade students from three ninth grade schools and three traditional high schools in the state of Mississippi. All ninth grade students used in this study took the Algebra I and/or the Biology assessment(s) from the SATP during the 2005-2006 school year. These

assessments are administered to students at the completion of Algebra I and Biology I courses as a requirement for high school graduation in the state of Mississippi. Because students have begun earning credit toward high school graduation, they still take the test after the completion of the course. It does not matter whether students are enrolled in a traditional high school setting or ninth grade academy. None of the students used in this study were repeating the Algebra I or Biology I courses and therefore had not taken these Subject Area Tests prior to this administration. The schools used in this study were all classified as 5A, schools with an enrollment of 1,000 or more students in grades nine through twelve including the 10-12 high school enrollment. The schools identified in the study were selected from regions of Mississippi, north, central, and south. The traditional high schools have comparable demographics to the identified ninth grade schools used in the study. The identified schools tested a minimum of 75 students in Biology I and also in Algebra I using the Mississippi SATP.

A total of 100 students were randomly selected from the test data from each school. Fifty students each were selected from Algebra I and Biology I test data. A total of 600 students were used for the study. The subject group consisted of female and male students from various ethnic backgrounds including African American, Caucasian, Asian, and Hispanic. However, the Asian and Hispanic populations in these schools were very small.

The chart in Table 1 shows the figures based on gender. Female students outnumbered male students both in the ninth grade academies and in the

traditional high schools used in this study. Although there were more females than males, the difference was less than five percent when ninth grade academies were compared to traditional high schools. These numbers are reflective of the numbers of the schools.

Table 1

School Demographics for Gender in Ninth Grade Academies and Traditional High Schools for the 2005—2006 School Year

| <u>Gender</u> | <u>Ninth Grade Academy</u> | <u>Traditional High School</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Female | 178 | 165 | 343 |
| % | 59.3% | 55% | 57.2% |
| Male | 122 | 135 | 257 |
| % | 40.7% | 45% | 42.8% |

The chart in Table 2 shows the ethnicity of the students used in this study was comprised of four groups: African Americans, Caucasians, Asians, and Hispanics. The number of Caucasians in the traditional high schools used for this study was more than twice the number of other ethnic groups, although African American students encompassed the majority of the remaining groups. The number of African American students tested in the ninth grade academies outnumbered the Caucasian students by five percent. There were very few Asian and Hispanic students enrolled in the ninth grade schools and traditional high schools used in this study.

School Demographics for Ethnicity in Ninth Grade Academies and Traditional High Schools for the 2005—2006 School Year

Table 2

| <u>Ethnicity</u> | <u>Ninth Grade Academies</u> | <u>Traditional High Schools</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| African American | 156 | 80 | 236 |
| % | 52% | 26.7% | 39.3% |
| Caucasian | 141 | 207 | 348 |
| % | 47% | 69% | 58% |
| Asian | 2 | 8 | 10 |
| % | .7% | 2.7% | 1.7% |
| Hispanic | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| % | .3% | 1.7% | 1.0% |

The mean score, found in Table 3, is higher in Algebra I and in Biology I for the ninth grade academies or schools than they are for the traditional high schools. However, the Biology I mean scores are higher than the Algebra I mean score for their respective groups. The difference in these scores are due to the fact that higher achieving students are allowed to take Algebra I in the eighth grade, therefore their scores are counted in the previous school year whereas these same high achieving students are taking Biology I in ninth grade. Students in Mississippi schools are not allowed to take Biology I until they are in ninth grade. When these students are added to the Biology I group, their scores will cause the Biology I mean score to be higher.

The standard deviations are large due to a wide range of scores found in both groups. There several students in ninth grade schools and in traditional high schools who scored perfect scores of 500. The lowest scores were 282.

Table 3

A Summary of Means and Standard Deviation of Algebra I and Biology I Scores for Ninth Grade Academies and Traditional High Schools

| Test | Group | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-----------|-------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| Algebra I | Ninth Grade Academy | 375.66 | 30.69 |
| | Traditional High School | 359.23 | 40.24 |
| Biology I | Ninth Grade Academy | 399.85 | 50.76 |
| | Traditional High School | 370.63 | 54.70 |

*SAPT scores in Algebra I and Biology I range from 250-500.

Tests of Hypothesis

The results from testing the hypotheses of the study are provided. Each hypothesis is reiterated, and the analysis of the data is presented for each hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1:

H₁: There is a significant difference in Algebra I SATP scores between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools [$t(248)=3.47, p=.001$]. Therefore, hypothesis

1 was accepted. The mean of the SATP scores in Algebra I was higher for the students in the ninth grade academies or schools than the mean of the test scores for ninth grade students in the traditional high schools. Table 3 represents the means used to test hypothesis 1.

H₂: There is a significant difference in Biology I SATP scores between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools [$t(248)=4.26, p<.001$]. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was accepted. The mean of the SATP scores in Biology I was higher for the students in the ninth grade academies or schools than the mean of the test scores for ninth grade students in the traditional high schools. Table 3 presents the means used to test hypothesis 2.

Ancillary Findings

While it was not hypothesized, data was found that relates to student achievement. The findings presented in Table 4 reveals African American students in ninth grade academies attain higher scores on the SATP in Biology I than those in traditional high schools. The mean score difference for African American students in ninth grade schools is more than 50 points higher than the mean score of African American students in traditional high schools.

African American students in the ninth grade schools had a higher mean score on the Biology I SATP than Caucasian and African American students in the traditional high schools. The Biology I mean score of Caucasian students in ninth grade schools is less than one point higher than the Biology I mean score of African American students in ninth grade schools. In the traditional high

Table 4

A Summary of Means and Standard Deviation of Scores in Biology I for African American and Caucasian Students

| Group | Ethnicity | Mean | Standard Deviation | N |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------|--------------------|-----|
| Ninth Grade Academy | African American | 400.07 | 54.33 | 46 |
| | Caucasian | 401.00 | 47.47 | 53 |
| | Total | 400.57 | 50.51 | 99 |
| Traditional High School | African American | 342.07 | 54.50 | 41 |
| | Caucasian | 382.10 | 51.25 | 105 |
| | Total | 370.86 | 55.04 | 146 |
| Total | African American | 372.74 | 61.43 | 87 |
| | Caucasian | 388.44 | 50.66 | 158 |
| | Total | 382.86 | 55.12 | 245 |

*SAPT scores in Algebra I and Biology I range from 250-500.

schools, Caucasian students outscored African American students 40 points on the Subject Area Test in Biology I. However, Caucasian students in ninth grade schools had a mean score nearly 20 points higher than Caucasian students in traditional high schools.

The data also proved gender was not significant in this study.

Summary

In this study, the ninth grade academies or schools did prove to be effective for ninth grade students when compared to the ninth grade students

enrolled in the traditional high school setting. There were several significant differences that favored the ninth grade academy concept. Students enrolled in the ninth grade academies outperformed the students in the traditional high schools in Algebra I by more than 15 points on the SATP. The ninth grade students enrolled in the ninth grade academies also scored nearly 25 points higher on the Subject Area Test in Biology I. Both ninth grade academy groups did significantly better on each of the subjects in which they were assessed than the traditional high school groups.

Data gathered on ethnicity in this study revealed there were slightly more African American students tested in the ninth grade academies compared to the number of Caucasian students tested. Whereas in the traditional high schools the number of Caucasian students used in this study was more than twice the number of African American students tested and used in this study.

There were no significant findings when Algebra I scores were compared by ethnicity, however, biology I scores did illustrate some differences. Biology I scores were significantly higher than Algebra I scores in ninth grade academies and in traditional high schools. The Biology I scores for African American students in the ninth grade academies or schools were 58 points higher than the African American students in the traditional high schools. These figures are found in Table 5.

In Biology I, African American students in the ninth grade academies had a mean score which was only three-tenths of one point lower than the mean score of Caucasian students from the ninth grade academies used in this study.

While in the traditional high schools, the Caucasian students scored 40.3 points higher than the African American students on the Biology I assessment of the SATP. Caucasian students in the ninth grade academies also scored 19.90 points higher than the Caucasian students in the traditional high schools.

Table 5

A Summary of Means and Standard Deviation of Scores in Biology I for African American Students

| Group | Mean | Standard Deviation | N |
|-------------------------|--------|--------------------|----|
| Ninth Grade Academy | 400.07 | 54.33 | 46 |
| Traditional High School | 342.07 | 54.50 | 41 |

Other findings demonstrated a significant difference between ninth grade academies and traditional high schools ($p < .001$). There was a significant difference in Biology I test scores between all African American ninth grade students and all Caucasian ninth grade students ($p = .004$) used in this study. Finally, there is also a significant difference in the interaction ($p = .006$) of ninth grade students from all schools used in this study with all ninth grade students from all ethnicities used in this study. This information is illustrated in Table 6.

The information found in this chapter supports the suggestion that ninth grade academies are effective and have the potential to decrease the dropout rate. In addition, data support the implication ninth grade academies are conducive environments to enhance the success for African Americans. This can

be useful because African American males still rank among the highest group of dropouts today. From the data found, African Americans scored significantly higher in a controlled setting where more individualized instruction could be received and their needs better met. Also, the study indicates ninth grade academies are favorable for decreasing chances of students dropping out of school for many ethnic groups. Ninth grade academies are likely to be on the rise as educators research practices to adhere to the NCLB Act.

Table 6

| Source | df | F | Sig. |
|---|----|--------|------|
| Ninth Grade Academies/ Traditional High Schools (GROUP) | 1 | 29.788 | .000 |
| African American/ Caucasian (ETHNICITY) | 1 | 8.450 | .004 |
| GROUP * ETHNICITY | 1 | 7.696 | .006 |

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The general purpose of this study was to determine if academic achievement was higher for ninth grade students in ninth grade schools or academies when compared to ninth grade students in traditional high schools based on several variables. These variables included scores from the SATP in Algebra I and Biology I, ethnicity, and gender of randomly selected ninth grade students from three ninth grade schools and three traditional high schools in the state of Mississippi. These variables were analyzed to determine if there was a significant difference in student achievement between the two types of ninth grade settings.

Summary of Procedures

The study was limited to three ninth grade schools in the state of Mississippi. There are four ninth grade schools attached to 5A high schools, which are recognized by the Mississippi Department of Education. One of these ninth grade schools tested less than 50 students on the Algebra I and Biology I Subject Area Test. Therefore, that school was not used in this study. Three traditional high schools were selected for this study based on proximity to the ninth grade schools and similarities in demographics to the ninth grade schools such as ethnicity and socioeconomic make-up. The schools were chosen based on demographic information found on the Mississippi Department of Education website. Next, a packet containing a letter of request was mailed to the

superintendents soliciting a letter of permission to use data from the SATP in Algebra I and Biology I for the 2005-2006 school year. The packet contained a letter explaining the study and its purpose, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the researcher. An electronic mail was sent to superintendents and principals of the schools as a follow-up communication for the request.

A total of 50 students were randomly selected from each school to be used as subjects for this study. Variables used from the data included test scores, gender and ethnicity of the subjects used in the study. Although many ninth grade students took both of the SATP's in Algebra I and Biology I, several of the students take either of these courses during a different year between their eighth and twelfth grade years based on the districts' curriculum.

All six schools from which data were requested granted the researcher permission to use the archival data from their respective school districts. All information requested with the data was sent and was also usable. The data were entered into SPSS and tests were run to analyze the data.

Summary of Findings

Chapter IV provides information about the descriptive analysis of the data gathered in the study as well as tests of the hypotheses. All of the schools used in this study are classified as 5A schools in the state of Mississippi. That is, these schools contained an enrollment of 1,000 or more students in grades nine through 12. The ninth grade academies used in this study are recognized as self-sufficient schools which operate independently from the high schools which consisted of grade 10 through 12. The traditional high schools all consisted of

grades nine through 12 which were all contained on one campus and operated as one independent school. The schools used in this study had ninth grade enrollments ranging from 350 to 500 students.

The ninth grade academies used in this study consisted of 59.3% female students and 40.7% male students, while the traditional high schools consisted of 55.0% female students and 45.0% male students. The study consisted of a total of 57.2% female ninth grade students and a total of 42.8% male ninth grade students.

The ethnic make up of ninth grade students enrolled in ninth grade academies used in this study consisted of 52.0% African American and 47.0% Caucasian. In the traditional high schools, 26.7% of the ninth grade students used in this study was African American while 69.0% of the ninth grade students were Caucasian. A small percentage (2.7%) of the students used in the study was of other ethnicity groups.

The students used in this study, who were enrolled in the ninth grade academies, performed significantly better than students enrolled in the traditional high schools on the SATP in Algebra I and Biology I. The mean score in Algebra I for the ninth grade academy was 375.66 compared to a mean score of 359.23 for the traditional high school. In Biology I, the students attending the ninth grade academy earned a mean score of 399.85 compared to the students at the traditional high school who had a mean score of 370.63.

Further analysis disclosed some significant findings regarding the Biology I test results. African American students in the ninth grade academies scored a

mean of 400.07 compared to the African American students in the traditional high school who scored a mean of 342.07. The Caucasian students in the ninth grade academies scored 401.00 while the Caucasian students in the traditional high school scored 382.10. The difference in mean scores, by ethnicity, of students enrolled in ninth grade academies was only .03 compared to a difference in the traditional high school mean scores of 20.03.

Tests of Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance. The results of the tests of the hypotheses follow.

Hypothesis 1 stated: There is a significant difference in Algebra I SATP scores between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools.

A significant difference was found in scores on the Algebra I SATP between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Hypothesis 2 stated: There is a significant difference in Biology I SATP scores between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools.

A significant difference was found in scores on the Biology I SATP between freshman students who attend ninth grade academies and freshman students who attend traditional high schools. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was accepted.

Discussion

The ninth grade academy concept was very effective when compared to the traditional high school concept according to the results of this study. The findings of this study showed significantly higher test results for the ninth grade schools. This indicates the theory of isolating ninth grade students from high school students in grades 10 through 12 did what it was designed to accomplish. The purpose of the ninth grade academy was to increase academic achievement for students during this critical transitional year for students moving from middle to high school. The ninth grade academy is also designed to provide the adolescent aged students with the attention and nourishment needed to get through this period, without the competition of peer pressure from the older students found in the traditional high school.

A study conducted by Brough, Bergmann, and Holt (2006) stated that students who lacked foundational basic academic skills in reading, math, and writing become more at risk of failure as the level of content material and expectations increase. Most of these students who are at risk of failing usually stay in school because they receive enough attention while they are in the elementary and middle schools. Once these students are promoted to the ninth grade, the rigors of high school begin to challenge them more. Most of the at-risk students will succumb to the challenge and fail. As soon as they are above compulsory age, many of these students drop out of school.

Although the findings of this study did not show a significant difference in males and females in the ninth grade academies and traditional high schools, the

higher scores in the ninth grade schools may indicate improved performance for male students, particularly African American male students. Walter Haney (1999) conducted a study which found ninth grade to be a critical component in the education pipeline and is closing for many students, especially minority students. The study concluded ninth grade African-American males fared worse with completing requirements for graduation.

Haney's study did show statistically significant differences in ninth grade schools compared with traditional high schools based on ethnicity with the Biology I test scores. African American students at ninth grade schools outperformed all traditional high school students used in this study. This is another indication the ninth grade academies are successful in the state of Mississippi. This information is pertinent to traditional high schools with failing African American male ninth grade students. Honawar (2004) noted that dropout rates are highest among Hispanic and African-American students. Other studies found similar evidence that minorities have lower completion rates than Caucasian students. Barton used Elaine Allensworth's study, completed in 2005, to support this finding. She conducted a study sampling Chicago schools and discovered that among boys, only 39 percent of African-American students graduated by age 19, compared with 51 percent of Latino students and 58 percent of white students. The rates among girls were better with 57 percent of African-American students graduating compared to 65 percent for Latino students and 71 percent for Caucasian students. Most of the students are failing at the ninth grade. The results of this study are important to school administrators

and school board members considering ninth grade academies as a strategy to improve student achievement and graduation rates.

Although none of the ninth grade schools used in this study were located in the inner-city, research cited in Chapter II of this study found school districts in inner-cities of Chicago, Philadelphia, and Detroit have adopted some form of the ninth grade academy concept. These academies reported improvement in the areas of student achievement, attendance, and discipline. Many schools located in the inner-city are struggling with low achievement and graduation rates and could possibly benefit from ninth grade academies.

There is not a perfect solution to be sure that every child is successful in the educational setting. The ninth grade academy idea may be good for large school districts with 1,200 students in a school, but there are many factors which school administrators and school boards must consider, including; size of enrollment, funds for a new facility, availability of a vacant facility, ability to staff, and whether the concept is practical for the school district.

An exception to the ninth grade academy concept pertains to schools with low enrollment in ninth grade. The smaller enrollments will not allow these schools to create classes for specific student needs. For instance, it may not be feasible to establish a ninth grade academy if there are not enough students for full classes. Thus the pupil/teacher ratio could be too low, causing a district to lose money.

School administrators and school boards can benefit from the findings of this study. With the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act and the

expectations of increasing the graduation rate for high schools, it will become increasingly important to improve the educational process at the ninth grade level.

Conclusions

The findings of this study implicate reasons as to why the ninth grade academy concept is successful for ninth grade students:

1. Students in ninth grade academies scored higher on the Subject Area Testing Program in Algebra I. They outperformed the students in traditional high schools by significantly higher scores in Algebra I.
2. Students in ninth grade academies scored higher on the Subject Area Testing Program in Biology I. They outperformed the students in traditional high schools by significantly higher scores in Biology I.
3. African American students in ninth grade academies performed significantly better than Caucasian and African American ninth grade students in traditional high schools.

Limitations

1. Some schools require all ninth grade students to take Biology I in the ninth grade, whereas others only allow high achieving ninth grade students to take Biology I. This may have an effect of the mean score for the schools on the SATP in Biology I.

Recommendations for Practice

It is recommended that large traditional high schools with increasing numbers of failing students, dropouts, high absentee rate, and excessive

discipline issues with ninth grade students, consider creating ninth grade academies or schools. It is also recommended that schools study the research to determine if the concept is practical for their school district. If the school or school district makes the decision to implement the ninth grade academy concept, it is recommended that teachers and staff members are trained thoroughly with follow-up training.

Though there were no statistically significant differences regarding gender found in this study, schools with failing males, particularly African American males, should consider this concept when addressing that issue. Since the results of the study revealed high academic achievement of African American students in Biology I, the researcher assumed African American males are more successful in ninth grade schools or academies.

Recommendations for Future Research

After analyzing the results within this study, the following recommendations can be made for future studies of ninth grade academies:

1. It is recommended that the study be extended to include schools with the ninth grade school-within-a-school concept. Many schools are using this concept although they are not recognized as separate and independent schools.
2. It is recommended that the study be repeated and include other factors such as discipline and average daily attendance. This information can be useful in demonstrating a more extensive comparison between ninth grade academies and traditional high schools.

3. It is recommended that the study be repeated with a two-year study which tracks students' progress during the follow year after the ninth grade academy compared to the second year in the traditional high school.
4. It is recommended that the study be repeated to expand to a region larger than one state. The study of a three to five state region can give the researcher more information on the success or non-success of the ninth grade academy concept.

APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FORM
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
(SUBMIT THIS FORM IN DUPLICATE)

Protocol # 26071103
(office use only)

Name Eddie James Peasant II Phone (228) 697-0027

E-Mail Address www.epeasant@bellsouth.net

Mailing Address 13342 Roxbury Place, Gulfport, MS, 39503
(address to receive information regarding this application)

College/Division College of Education and Psychology Dept Educational Leadership & Research

Department Box # 5027 Phone 266-4580

Proposed Project Dates: From July 14, 2006 To December 15, 2006
(specific month, day and year of the beginning and ending dates of full project, not just data collection)

Title Crossing the Bridge from Eighth to Tenth Grade: Can Ninth Grade Schools Make It Better?

Funding Agencies or Research Sponsors none

Grant Number (when applicable) _____

5027 New Project

X Dissertation or Thesis

Renewal or Continuation: Protocol # _____

Change in Previously Approved Project: Protocol # _____

Eddie J. Peasant II 7/14/06
Principal Investigator Date

AD 7/11/06
Advisor Date

AD 7/11/06
Department Chair Date

RECOMMENDATION OF HSPRC MEMBER

X Category I, Exempt under Subpart A, Section 46.101 (B) (2), 45CFR46.

_____ Category II, Expedited Review, Subpart A, Section 46.110 and Subparagraph ().

_____ Category III/Full Committee Review.

Lauren A. Hoeman 7-12-06
HSPRC College/Division Member DATE

Lauren A. Hoeman 7-19-06
HSPRC Chair DATE

Institutional Review Board

I. Statement of Project Goals

- i. The goal of this project will be to determine the effectiveness of ninth grade schools. In order to complete this task or determine effectiveness, student academic achievement in ninth grade schools or academies when compared to the academic achievement of ninth grade students in traditional 9-12 high schools will be examined.

II. Protocol

A. Describe procedures

Students' information will be obtained from archival data. This information will be obtained from ninth grade students' scores on the Mississippi Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) in Algebra I and Biology I.

B. Number and range of students

The students will range in ages from 14 – 16 years of age. Information from approximately 350 ninth grade students will be used in the study. The information is available for school use and will be obtained from the ninth grade and high schools with the superintendents' consent.

C. Subject population

The subjects will be obtained from three ninth grade schools or academies and three traditional high schools in the state of Mississippi. The students will be male and female. They are students from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

D. How long will the procedure take?

The subjects in the study entered the ninth grade for the 2005-2006 school year. The students enrolled in Algebra I and Biology I will be given the Subject Area Test upon the completion of the course. The un-timed assessment takes approximately three hours for most students. The results of the test will be available by June 30, 2006.

E. Where will the procedures be done? Where will the study be conducted?

The ninth grade schools from the following school districts will be used in this study: Harrison County School District, Clinton Public Schools, and Madison School District.

The traditional high schools from the following school districts will be used in this study: Gulfport School District, Rankin County School District, and Starkville School District.

F. Name and describe the data gathering tool.

The Mississippi Subject Area Testing Program in Algebra I and Biology I assesses students' proficiency in these disciplines. The assessment is given to students upon the completion of the course. Subject Area Tests are developed by committees made up of qualified educators from schools in the state of Mississippi. Proficiency on the

Subject Area Tests is a requirement for high school graduation in the state of Mississippi.

G. Special situations

No special provisions were needed for this study.

H. Data Collection

Data will be collected from the Subject Area Testing Program. This information is a computerized document. The overall results for each school will be found on the Mississippi Department of Education's website. Ninth grade results from the Algebra I and Biology I Subject Area Tests will be collected from the schools involved in the study. Information collected will include test scores, ethnicity, and gender for each student tested. Names, social security numbers, or other identifiers will not be included.

I. Letters of approval

A letter of approval will be collected from the superintendents of the participating school districts.

III. Benefits of the study

- A. There will be no immediate benefits of the study for the participants. However, the results could have an impact to school districts seeking to improve academic achievement of ninth grade students.

IV. Risks

A. Possible risks to the participants

There are no risks to the participants. Students have already taken the Subject Area Test. Data collected will not identify any students by name or identification numbers. Because these data are already recorded, no further work will be required of the students as it relates to this study.

B. Termination

Data will be collected for all ninth grade students who were tested at the participating schools. All non-tested ninth grade students will not be included in the study. Students will be omitted from the study by random selection.

C. Method for maintaining anonymity

Students' names will not be included in this study. Names and identification numbers will be omitted from the data before it is sent to the researcher.

D. Maintenance of confidentiality

The data will be kept with the researcher at all times. This is an independent research study. Therefore, information linking identity to the participants will not be revealed to any other parties.

E. Disposition of data

All student information revealing scores, ethnicity, and gender will be shredded after the study has been conducted.

V. Informed consent

Consent will be received from the superintendents of the participating school districts before the data are obtained. A verbal commitment will be taken followed by a written consent of approval. Parental consent is not needed because names and identification numbers will not be used in the study.

APPENDIX B



The University of
Southern Mississippi

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.5509
www.usm.edu/irb

TO: Eddie Peasant
13342 Roxbury Place
Gulfport, MS 39503

FROM: Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 26071103

PROJECT TITLE: Crossing the Bridge From Eighth to Tenth Grade: Can Ninth
Grade Schools Make it Better?

Enclosed is The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection
Review Committee Notice of Committee Action taken on the above referenced
project proposal. If I can be of further assistance, contact me at (601) 266-4279,
FAX at (601) 266-4275, or you can e-mail me at Lawrence.Hosman@usm.edu.
Good luck with your research.



The University of
Southern Mississippi

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.5509
www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **26071103**

PROJECT TITLE: **Crossing the Bridge From Eighth to Tenth Grade: Can Ninth Grade Schools Make it Better?**

PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: **07/14/06 to 12/15/06**

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation or Thesis**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **Eddie James Peasant, II**

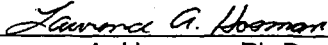
COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Educational Leadership & Research**

FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**

HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Exempt Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **07/18/06 to 07/17/07**



Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

7-19-06

Date

APPENDIX C

Eddie J. Peasant

13342 Roxbury Place Gulfport, MS 39503 (228)697-0027 epeasant@bellsouth.net

July 23, 2006

Dear Superintendent:

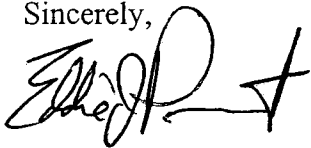
I am a student in the doctoral program at the University of Southern Mississippi working on my Ed.D in educational administration. At this point of the program, I have begun writing my dissertation. The subject I have chosen to investigate is the effectiveness of ninth grade academies or schools when compared to traditional high schools, grades nine through 12. Because your school or academy meets the criteria to use in this project, I am requesting permission to obtain information from the school in order to complete the study.

For this study I am using 5A schools to include in the research. The investigation will be completed by using SATP scores on the Algebra I and Biology I of ninth grade students from the 2005 – 2006 school year. Because this information is confidential, identifiers that will link scores to students will be requested to be removed before the information is given to me. Upon completion of the study, all information will be shredded.

This research project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee which ensures research projects involving human subjects (in any form or fashion) follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by phone or e-mail using the information above.

An official letter from your school granting permission to use your scores for this study would be greatly appreciated. In addition, once the study has been completed, I will be more than happy to share my findings with you and the school. In advance, I thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,



Eddie J. Peasant

APPENDIX D



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

[REDACTED] SCHOOL DISTRICT
GREENSBORO CENTER, 401 GREENSBORO
[REDACTED] MISSISSIPPI 39759

TELEPHONE [REDACTED]
FACSIMILE [REDACTED]

July 12, 2006

Mr. Eddie J. Peasant
13342 Roxbury Place
Gulfport, MS 39503

Dear Eddie:

At last night's board meeting, the [REDACTED] School District Board of Trustees approved your request to use SATP scores on the Algebra I and Biology I of ninth grade students from the 2005-2006 school year for research for your dissertation. Please contact Mrs. Judy [REDACTED] Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, at [REDACTED] to get copies of the scores.

If you need additional information, please contact my office.

Sincerely,

[Handwritten signature]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Superintendent

/ds

cc: Mrs. Judy [REDACTED]

*Good luck,
Dr. Peasant*

APPENDIX E



[REDACTED] Public School District
P. O. Box 300
[REDACTED] Mississippi 39060

[REDACTED] Ph.D.
Superintendent of Education

Mr. Eddie Peasant
13342 Roxbury Place
Gulfport, MS 39503

Dear Mr. Peasant:

Your request to use 2005-06 SATP Algebra I and Biology I scores of ninth grade students in the [REDACTED] Public School District has been received. I reviewed your request with Tim [REDACTED], assistant superintendent, who supervises the assessment programs for the district. He and I are in agreement that you can use the school test data in your research project. It is our understanding that student identifiers will be removed for your research study.

Mr. [REDACTED] suggested that you access the scores from the MARS system; however, you are welcome to contact him [REDACTED] to discuss obtaining the scores.

Best wishes as you begin this last phase of your doctoral degree. The district is interested in reviewing the outcome of your study when it is complete.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Ph.D.
Superintendent

c: Tim [REDACTED]

From the Desk of [REDACTED]

Superintendent

[REDACTED] School District

PO Box 220

[REDACTED] Mississippi 39502

[REDACTED]schools.org

July 10, 2006

Eddie J. Peasant
13342 Roxbury Place
Gulfport, Mississippi 39503

Dear Mr. Peasant:

Please consider this letter as receipt of your July 5, 2006, letter requesting that you use test score information pertaining to the [REDACTED] School District's Algebra I and Biology I SATP scores. Please feel free to use the [REDACTED] Ninth Grade School's test scores for your defined purpose.

As with any study, please make sure you do not include individual student names in your research and as stated in your letter, follow federal regulations in securing your documentation.

In service to the youth of the [REDACTED] School District,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Superintendent



Every Decision!
What is best for children?
Every Time!

REFERENCES

- Allensworth, E. (2005). Graduation and dropout trends in Chicago: A look at cohorts of students from 1991 through 2004. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.
- Barton, P. E. (2006). The dropout problem: losing ground. *Educational Leadership*, 63(5), 14-18.
- Black, S. (2004). The pivotal year. *American School Board Journal*, 191(2), 42-44.
- Bounds, H. (2006, January). Schools must find ways to prevent students from dropping out. *State Superintendent of Education's Weekly Column*, pp. 1-2.
- Boyle, J. R., & Weishaar, M. K. (2001). The effects of strategic note taking on the recall and comprehension of lecture information for high school students with disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 16, 133-141.
- Brough, J., Bergmann, S., & Holt, L. (2006). *Teach me: I dare you*. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education.
- Burka, Paul (2004). Incomplete. *Texas Monthly*, 32(10), 10-14.
- Burke, J. (2002). Making notes, making meaning. *Voices from the Middle*, 9(4), 15-21.
- Butts, M. J. (2005). Student Perceptions of factors leading to an effective transition from eighth to ninth grade. *American Secondary Education* 34(1), 70-80.

- Catterall, J. S. (1998). Risk and resilience in student transitions to high school. *American Journal of Education, 106*, 302-333.
- Chmelynski, C. (2004). Ninth-Grade academies keep kids in school. *Education Digest, 69*(5), 48-50.
- Chute, Eleanor (1999). Back to school: Ninth grade proves to be a pivotal year for youths. Retrieved September 20, 2005 from the World Wide Web: www.asbj.com/2004/02/0204research.html.
- Crist, K. (1991). Restoring opportunity for drop-outs. *Equity and Excellence, 25*, 36-39.
- Deshler, D. D., Schumaker, J. B., Lenz, B. K., Bulgren, J. A., Hock, M. F., Knight, J., et al. (2001). Ensuring content area learning by secondary students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 16*, 96-108.
- Eccles (Parsons), J., Midgley, C., & Adler, T. F. (1984). Grade-related changes in the school environment: Effects on achievement motivation. In J. G. Nicholls (Ed.), *Advances in motivation and achievement*, (vol. 3, pp. 283-331). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- The Education Pipeline in the United States, 1970-2000. Retrieved September 20, 2005 from the World Wide Web: www.bc.edu/nbetpp.
- Education Trust. (2003, December). Telling the whole truth (or not) about high school graduation. Washington, DC: Author.

- Fulk, Barbara (2003). Concerns about ninth-grade students' poor academic performance: one school's action plan. *American Secondary Education*, 31(2), 8-26.
- Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994, 20 U.S.C.A. § 5801 et seq. Goals 2000: Educate America Act, P.L. 103-227).
- Haney, W., Madaus, G., Abrams, L., Wheelock, A., Miao, J., & Gruia, I. (2004). *The education pipeline in the United States, 1970-2004*. Chestnut Hill, MA: National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy.
- Hertzog, C. & Morgan, P. (1999). *Transition: A process not an event*. Reston VA: National Association of School Principals.
- Hertzog, C. & Morgan, P. (1998). Breaking the barriers between middle school and high school: Developing a transition team for student success. *NASSP Bulletin*, 82(597), 94-98.
- Hertzog, C. J., Morgan, P. L., Diamond, P. A., & Walker, M. J. (1996). Transition to high school: A look at student perceptions. *Becoming*, 7(2), 6-8.
- High Schools That Work (2005). Opening doors to the future: Preparing low achieving middle grades students to succeed in high school. Retrieved April 19, 2006 from the World Wide Web:
<http://www.chccs.k12.nc.us/ISD/HighSchoolreform9thGrad.pdf>
- Holland, H., Mazzoli, K. (2001). Where everybody knows your name. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 83, 294-303.
- Honawar, Vaishali (2004). Texas dropouts. *Education Week*. 24(13), p. 16.

- Ingram, Debra (2004). Rethink the dropout rate. *Teaching Artist Journal*, 2(1), 60-62.
- Isakson, K. & Jarvis, P. (1999). The adjustment of adolescents during the transition into high school: a short-term longitudinal study. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 28, 1.
- Kaufman, P., Alt, M. N., & Chapman, C. (2001). Dropout rates in the United States: 2000, NCES 2002-114. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Letrello, T. M. & Miles, D. D. (2003). The transition from middle school to high school: Students with and without learning disabilities share their perceptions. *The Clearing House*, 79(4), 212-214.
- Lounsbury, J. & Johnston, J. H. (1985). How fares the ninth grade? A day in the life of a 9th grader. Reston, Va.: National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- Mac Iver, D. J. (1990). Meeting the needs of young adolescents: Advisory groups, interdisciplinary teaching teams, and school transition programs. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 71, 458-464.
- Marder, C. (1992). How well are youth with disabilities really doing? A comparison of youth with disabilities and youth in general. *A report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.
- Mississippi Subject Area Testing Program (2005). Summary of technical information. Mississippi Department of Education, p. 2. Retrieved June 15,

- 2006 from the World Wide Web: www.mde.k12.ms.us.
- Mizelle, N. B. (1995). Transition from middle school into high school: The student perspective. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.
- Mizelle, Nancy (2005). Moving out of middle school. *Educational Leadership*, 62(7), 56-60.
- Mizelle, N. & Irvine, J.. Transition from middle school into high school. Westerville, Ohio: National Middle School Association. Retrieved February 20, 2006 from the World Wide Web: www.nmsa.org/services/transition.htm.
- National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. (2004). The condition of education 2004. Washington, DC: Author.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002). Dropout Prevention Act. Retrieved June 12, 2006 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg15.html>.
- No Educator Left Behind: Dropouts (2006). Retrieved August 16, 2006 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.education-world.com/aissues.shtml>.
- Oates, J., Flores, R., & Weishew, N. (1998). Achieving student success in inner-city schools is possible. *Middle Level Education Quarterly*, 21(3), 51-62.
- Popham, J. (2003). Living (Or Dying) With Your NCLB Tests. *The School Administrator*, 60(11), 10-14.
- Quint, J., Miller, C., Pastor, J. & Cytron, R. (1999). Project transition: Testing an intervention to help high school freshmen succeed. Retrieved August 16,

2006 from the World Wide Web:

http://www.mdrc.org/project_publications_29_68.html

- Reents, Jennifer (2002). Isolating 9th graders. *School Administrator*, 59 (3), 14-19.
- Reinhard, Beth (1997, December 3). Detroit schools target 9th grade in effort to reduce dropout rate. *Education Week*, 17(15), 1-3.
- Reith, H. J., & Polsgrove, L. (1994). Curriculum and instructional issues in teaching secondary students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 9, 118-126.
- Reyes, O., Gillock, K., Kobus, K., & Sanchez, B. (2000). A longitudinal examination of the transition into senior high school for adolescents from urban, low-income status, and predominantly minority backgrounds. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 28, 519.
- Smith, J. & Diller, H. (1999). *Unmotivated Adolescents: Disabilities and Gifted Education*. Dallas: Apodixis Press.
- Stanley, B., Slate, J. R., & Jones, C. H. (1999). Study behaviors of college preparatory and honors students in the ninth grade. *The High School Journal*, 82, 165-171.
- Starkman, N., Scales, P., & Roberts, C. (1999). *Great places to learn: How asset-building schools help students succeed*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.
- Viadero, Debra (2004). Study Probes Enrollment 'Bulge' in 9th Grade. *Education Week*, 23(20), 15-16.

Wagner, M. (1989). The transition experiences of youth with disabilities: A report from the national longitudinal study. Paper presented at the Council for Exceptional Children, San Francisco, CA.

Walsh, Margaret (2002). Delivering the promise to 9th graders: One city's experiment in single-grade schooling proves rewarding for staff and students. *School Administrator*, 59(3), 20-22.

Wheelock, Anne (1993). School reform for secondary school students: a case for focusing on ninth grade. Unpublished paper.

Zigmond, N. (1990). Rethinking secondary school programs for students with learning disabilities. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 23, 1-12.