

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF A TRANSITION PROGRAM AND  
TRADITIONAL PROGRAM OF STUDY ON OVER AGE FIRST TIME NINTH  
GRADE STUDENTS

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine if a transition program has a greater success rate, as measured by GPA, number of students recycled, attendance, and conduct, than a traditional program of study for over age, first time ninth grade students by the end of first semester of the ninth grade. Some of the typical outcomes during the transition to high school from grade 8 to grade 9 are high failure rates, lack of Algebra I readiness, and poor attendance. These concerns contribute to drop-out rates and the level of competitiveness students will have when facing the workforce. This is a timely issue as we continue to address Standards of Learning (SOL) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the initiatives to rethink our high schools as they attempt to prepare students for the ongoing changes of the economy, workforce, and expectations of colleges and universities.

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Felicia D. Dyke

## Dedication

To my loving husband, Vernon, thank you for your tremendous support, encouragement, and patience. This would not be possible if it were not for you. You have listened numerous nights providing advice and guidance when I doubted myself. You have provided resources and emotional support that continues to be a tower of strength. Thank you for being a loving father. You have spent many hours with our precious son while I continued this endeavor. To my precious one-year old son Caleb, Mommy loves you so very much and hopes that you will one day be proud of me. This has indeed been a long road traveled for our family with obstacles along the way. I look forward to spending more time together as a family.

To my supportive grandparents, thank you for providing me with a strong upbringing that encouraged hard work and discipline. Without these qualities I would not be who I am today. To my special aunt, thank you for listening and being supportive of all my ideas and goals. I have been fortunate to have family and friends that have provided inspiring words of encouragement during this endeavor.

To my God Jehovah, thank you for providing me with a foundation and balance that continues to keep my role as a wife, mother, and faithful servant in the forefront. Without my faith I would be nothing.

I would like to thank Dr. Twiford, my chair, for all of the feedback and time spent advising and guiding me in a successful direction.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Adults transition in careers, music may transition from one key to another, or we transition in our conversation. When a seasoned teacher transitions in the lesson for the day it is smooth without gaps and loss of instructional time. Students also transition from one grade level to the next. Every grade level has some transitional impact with major transitions happening from elementary school to middle school and middle school to high school. Alspaugh (1998) suggests that there is a greater achievement loss from middle school to high school than from elementary school to middle school. The success at the ninth grade level lays the foundation for a student's high school career.

Concerns of transitional ninth grade students are reflected in baseline data in *Virginia's Blueprint for an Action Agenda*. This report cites the following concerns:

- 31 percent of eighth graders in Virginia scored at or above proficiency in mathematics;
- 36 percent of eighth graders in Virginia scored at or above proficiency in reading;
- 31 percent of eighth graders in Virginia scored at or above proficiency in science;
- 32 percent of eighth graders in Virginia scored at or above proficiency in writing (Warner, 2005).

These data indicate attention should be given to these rising ninth grade students who are not proficient in math, reading, science, and writing.

As a practicing administrator in Virginia, I have observed the following struggles of ninth grade students that are typical issues and outcomes during the transition to high school: ninth grade has the highest grade level failures and Algebra I, a ninth grade course, is the most failed course in the ninth grade. As a result, the numbers of ninth grade students who begin in a school are not in the school four years later to receive a

diploma. Freshman year credits earned and failures can often times predict if a student will graduate from high school and are early indicators of drop out risks (Ethnic News Watch, 2005). In 2000 my interest in this topic and issues surrounding it began.

Ethnic News Watch (2005) cites that ninth grade students are on-track if they earn at least five credits and no more than one “F” in a semester. These ninth grade students are 3.5 times more likely to graduate from high school than students who earn less than 5 units of credit. Educators and parents should build relationships with students and carefully monitor progress to ensure students are on-track to graduate (Ethnic News Watch, 2005).

### *Overview of the Study*

A transition program implemented at a high school in a school division in Southeastern Virginia focused on over age, first time ninth grade students. The purpose of this study is to determine if this transition program has an impact on over age, first time ninth grade students by the end of the first semester as measured by academic grade point average and number of students recycled at the end of first semester; as measured by the number of conduct referrals in out-of school suspension, in-school suspension, and detention at the end of first semester; as measured by daily attendance; and as related to gender. Criteria for the transition program in this study include the following: student must be a first time ninth grader, be at least 15 years old, be a general education student, and enrolled entire first semester. Students involved in the transition program are double blocked in core subject areas. Students have a total of four teachers that they will see on a daily basis. These teachers have common planning time.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Some of the typical outcomes during the transition to high school from grade 8 to grade 9 are high failure rates, lack of Algebra I readiness, and poor attendance. These concerns contribute to drop-out rates and the level of competitiveness students will have when facing the workforce. This is a most timely issue as we continue to address Standards of Learning (SOL) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the initiatives to rethink our high schools as they attempt to prepare students for the ongoing changes of the economy, workforce, and expectations of colleges and universities.

### *Significance of the Study*

The No Child Left Behind Act has increased interest in graduation rates, academic progress, attendance, and student participation (Kaufman & Chapman, 2004). This law has impacted educator's grading practices, course scheduling, and the level of exceptions that ninth grade students will encounter on a daily basis in their classes.

Ninth grade students, themselves, are concerned about conflicts, homework and expectations, how to find their class and not get lost, when they will eat, what they will wear, and bullying (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001). These ninth grade students are also eager to have additional freedom that was not offered to them at the middle school level. "Armed with often distorted and inaccurate information, freshmen confront the unknown on their first day of high school, their anxiety often compounded by a larger school, larger student body, and rumors of violence and drug use" (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001, p.1)

Concerns over the drop-out rate have been a growing issue facing educators. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) provides information about education in the United States. The Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School

Improvements Amendment of 1988 prompted NCES to release the first annual report on school dropouts in 1989. The growing concerns of dropout statistics are reflected in the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 which requires NCES to focus on initiatives to measure high school dropout rates, completion rates, and graduation rates (Kaufman & Chapman, 2004). NCES reports that in October 2001, 5 out of every 100 person's ages 15 through 24 who were enrolled in high school the previous October had left high school without completing a program (Kaufman & Chapman, 2004). The dropouts accounted for one-half million of the 10 million high school students in October 2000. In 2001, there were 3.8 million 16 through 24 year olds who had not yet completed a high school program (Kaufman & Chapman, 2004). The NCES reported 3.8 million of 16 year old students and older were cited in 2001 as not being enrolled or not completing high school.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported on high school dropouts using four rates (Kaufman & Chapman, 2004). The NCES uses the event drop-out rate, status drop-out rate, status completion rate, and 4-year completion rates to provide information concerning high school dropouts and completers. Event drop-out rates indicate the percentage of students who dropped out of school over a relatively short period of time. This type of reporting is very useful if there is a particular phenomenon or event such as Hurricane Katrina. Status drop-out rates measure the percentage of individuals who are not enrolled in high school and have no diploma. Status completion rates measure the percentage of a given population that has a high school credential regardless of when it was earned. These credentials use regular and alternative credentials. Lastly, 4 -year completion rates report the percentage of ninth grade students

who left school over a subsequent 4-year period with a high school credential (Kaufman & Chapman, 2004).

In 2000-2001, Virginia was ranked as number 10 out of the 50 states for event drop-out rates for public school students in grades 9-12. Virginia reported an 88.2 % status completion rate of 18 through 24 year olds not currently enrolled in high school or below in 2001, which is slightly higher than the 87 % in 1991(Kaufman & Chapman, 2004). Arizona reported a status completion rate of 77.6 % in 2001 which is the lowest of all the states. In rank order, Virginia is number eleven with an 83.8 % completion rate for ninth grade public school students (Kaufman & Chapman, 2004).

Virginia reports the state definition of the term “dropout” as an individual who was enrolled in school the previous year however was not enrolled on October 1 of the subsequent year. In 2003-2004, Virginia reports grades 7 through 12 had a total membership of 546,187. The number of reported dropouts was 11,203 (Warner, 2005).

In 2004 Virginia’s rate of grade retention is reported the highest in grade 9 at 13 percent. This rate is roughly twice that of the percent of students held back in grades 8 and 10 giving indication that grade 9 is a key transition point in high school (Commonwealth Education Policy Institute, 2004).

In June 2005, Virginia Governor Mark Warner reported baseline data that reflected of every 100 high school freshman in Virginia 74 percent graduate on time compared to the 68 percent nationally. The state ranks 26th in the nation for the number of freshman graduating on time (Warner, 2005). After reviewing high schools in Virginia the Department of Education determined that 88 of the 296 high schools have retention rates over 20 percent between the ninth and tenth grade. The Virginia

Department of Education concludes that students are put back in ninth grade or “recycled” making the ninth grade the largest grade level in the high school. It also suggests that students retained in grade nine often drop out of high school within their first two years (Warner, 2005).

Achievement gaps are also an area of concern as related to rising ninth grade students. In Virginia the baseline data suggests that Virginia has an achievement gap between low-income and minority populations. Noted areas of concern reported was “low-income eighth graders performing poorly on national mathematic assessments, smaller proportions of African American and Hispanic students complete ninth grade on time, and gaps in college participation between Whites and minority groups and between high and low-income students have widened in Virginia (Warner, 2005, p. A-17).”

The data further show that White students are graduating at higher rates than African-American students. Only 63.6 percent of African-American students and 69.1 percent of Hispanics completed the ninth grade within four years when compared with White counterparts at 80.7 percent in 2003-2004. The Virginia Department of Education identified 40 schools in 2003-2004 with a graduation rate as low as 49.8 percent (Warner, 2005).

Warner (2005) developed the Commonwealth of Access: Transition, Readiness, and Access Initiative to include high school transition grants. The high school transition grants support a variety of ninth grade transition programs and activities in the state of Virginia. This initiative invited teams of administrators and teachers from Virginia high schools to attend training that targeted the transition activities for ninth grade students. Some of the topics addressed at the symposium included: individualized graduation

plans, innovative learning opportunities for ninth grade students, interdisciplinary transition programs, and transition programs that focus on instructional leadership (Warner, 2005).

### *Purpose of Study*

The purpose of this study is to determine if a transition program has a greater success than a traditional program of study for over age, first time ninth grade students by the end of first semester as measured by academic achievement, conduct, and attendance.

### *Justification for the Study*

Cushman (2006) interviewed 16 students from Indiana after they started ninth grade at two different high schools. These students suggested that high schools could assist in the transition if they created smaller learning communities, group ninth grade students together in the same physical space, provide an orientation period during the school day, assign student mentors, create advisory groups and meaningful classroom activities, establish classroom norms, and provide extra help and activities. Cushman (2006) recommends listening and dialoguing with students about the high school transition to assist students with navigating their way through the first year of high school.

Black (2004) interviewed educators concerning ninth grade transition. One superintendent stated “ninth grade is the make it or break it year.” He reported that a quarter of the ninth grade students in his district skipped class, flunked courses, broke school rules and got suspended and returned as ninth grade students the subsequent year. A rough transition can make ninth grade little more than a holding tank for high school (Black, 2004). Another educator shared that “some students go into shock when they

enter ninth grade and struggle to navigate the large, impersonal, competitive environments which are far different from their more comfortable middle schools.”

(Black, 2004, p.42) Black (2004) suggests that ninth grade is a pivotal year with many students getting lost in the facility and unable to make a successful transition.

The ninth grade is not an easy year and is particularly difficult for students at risk. Ascher (1987) reported that if students have exhibited a lack of motivation or difficulties in the past, they will most likely drop out of school prior to completing ninth grade. Ninth grade students who have attendance, discipline, and academic problems are at risk of not completing ninth grade. Ascher (1987) stated, “Some are simply waiting until their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday so they can legitimately leave.”

Ascher (1987) goes on to conclude that schools can reduce the retention rate of ninth grade students who are at risk through some of the following policies and practices:

1. improve communication and planning between the previous school and high schools
2. decrease the number of required courses to fewer difficult courses - ninth grade students will be successful and ensure upper classmen will have a full and challenging course load
3. break the school into smaller stable units
4. expand the role of the homeroom teacher and extend class periods
5. sensitize teachers to concerns surrounding ninth grade
6. create alternatives to ninth grade retention
7. provide orientation activities prior to high school for students and parents (Ascher, 1987)

In 2000, the eighth grade cohort of the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 reported that 83 % of cohort members had earned a high school diploma, 9% had earned General Educational Development (GED) diplomas, and 8% had dropped out (Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt, & Chen, 2002). The study reports that of the students who did not complete high school, 14% indicated they were working towards some type of certificate equivalent to a high school diploma.

Despite the importance of a high school diploma for entry into postsecondary education and the workforce, the status completion has shown little change (Kaufman & Chapman, 2004). The ninth grade determines which students will finish high school and which will not (Black, 2004). NCES also reports persistent gaps between the high school dropout and completion rates among racial and ethnic groups. Whites continue to complete high school at higher rates than either Blacks or Hispanics. The status completion rate for Whites was 91% compared to 27% for Hispanics in 2001(Kaufman & Chapman, 2004).

Educators are currently charged with addressing the Standards of Learning and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the initiatives to rethink our high schools as they attempt to prepare students for the ongoing changes in the economy, workforce, and expectations of colleges and universities. Students are also faced with the Standards of Learning (SOL) requirement where high school students must acquire verified credits in at least 6 of the 11 End-of Course Tests in order to be eligible to receive a high school diploma in Virginia.

Students who have fallen significantly behind their grade level peers need more assistance, or a different kind of assistance (Hartzler & Jones, 2002). Hartzler and Jones

(2002) suggested that creation of transitional academies for beginning ninth grade students should be one of the highest priorities of high schools when trying to reduce student failures and increase graduation rates. Transitional programs for rising ninth grade students should be very comprehensive to include pertinent components that will promote student academic success (Hartzler & Jones, 2002). Some components could include but are not limited to parent involvement, teaming, weekly progress reports, and summer activities. Further investigation of types of transition programs should be investigated to address needed components that support academic achievement.

Patterson High School in Baltimore, Maryland, reported that their Talent Development Model, which reorganizes the school into smaller self-contained units, allows students and teachers to work in smaller teams and creates an environment that is more conducive for ninth graders (James, Will, Nettie, & Robert, 1997). Smaller environments and house concepts contribute to the personalization of high schools and increases student academic success. This is crucial in students' success if they are to matriculate through the high school setting (James et al.).

Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman, and Smith (2000) found that low-performing students who transition to ninth grade experience an even greater decline in academic performance. The study encouraged schools to recognize the vital role families play in students' academic success and acknowledged the Young Scholars Program as bringing academically able students together for mutual support to assist students who would have otherwise felt isolated (Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman, & Smith, 2000). This study suggests that the additional support will assist in the transition and increase

academic performance. Such an implementation will also address the drop-out issue, workforce development, and postsecondary preparedness.

A study conducted by Alspaugh (1998) found that students attending middle schools experienced a greater achievement loss in the transition to high school than did the students making the transition from a K-8 elementary school. One indicator of previous academic difficulty that resulted in grade retention during the elementary or middle grades years is students who are over age for the ninth grade. When students attend high school the pattern of social promotion is stopped and the use of course credits and verified credits are used as to promote students and to qualify for graduation.

“Because ninth grade is such a tough year for many students, some districts have created special academies or other programs to provide special attention to students in the first year of high school” stated Chmelynski (2004, p.48). Schools are experimenting with placing ninth graders apart in their own physical location with separate teachers and schedules to give students the literal and psychological space they need to mature. This academy approach allows students to develop closer bonds with a teacher who will in turn have more chances to personalize learning to meet students’ individual needs (Allen, 2001). Lindsay (1998) reported that Worthing Kilbourne High School’s freshmen transition program has a multistep process that begins 10 months before new students officially arrive and is based on the idea that all learners are capable of success, and that their success is in large part based on how welcome they feel entering their new school.

Hertzog (1998) suggested that a transition team can help eighth grade students develop an understanding of the academic rigors and co curricular options at the high school. This approach is designed to help eighth grade students prepare for the

expectations of the high school during their final year at the middle level school. Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) recommended that social support of new ninth graders may be enhanced through staff development for classroom strategies to make and keep classroom instruction interesting and engaging, conferences held with eighth graders several times each year, and planning sessions between middle school teachers and high school teachers. Having a strategic plan for implementation of teaming to assist student learning provides the opportunity for greater academic success of students.

### *Research Questions*

Research questions for this study are as follow:

1. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact academic achievement of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of students recycled at the end of first semester?
2. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact academic achievement of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by GPA at the end of first semester?
3. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student conduct of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of referrals for out-of-school suspension at the end of first semester?
4. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student conduct of over age first time ninth grade

students as measured by the number of referrals for in-school suspension at the end of first semester?

5. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student conduct of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of referrals for detention at the end of first semester?
6. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student attendance of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of absences students have accumulated at the end of first semester?

#### *Definition of Terms*

*Transition Program* for the purpose of this study refers to a plan to create enhanced transition for students' from grade 8 to grade 9 (Fields, 2005).

*Recycle* for the purpose this study refers to students who are placed back into grade nine after not meeting a school division's promotion requirements at the end of the semester or school year creating a ninth grade population far larger than a high school's other grades (Warner, 2005, p. A-2)

#### *Limitations*

The students in this study do not come from the same middle school which may have different expectations that will have an impact on students' current academic status and conduct. A second limitation is that participants and non-participants will not be taught by the same teachers. Additionally, participants in this study were a self selection sample.

### *Organization of Study*

This study is designed to determine if a transition program impacts over-age, first-time, ninth grade students at a high school in Southeastern Virginia. Chapter I introduced the topic, stated the problem, defined the terms, presented significance and justification of the study, and guiding research questions. Chapter II presents a review of literature related to a historical perspective of at-risk, school transition research, and smaller learning communities model. Studies concerning the topic of ninth grade transition will be presented.

Chapter III will include methodologies to reflect how data are collected, interpreted and analyzed. Explanation of all variables will be provided to include null hypotheses and a description of the population.

Chapter IV reports the findings of the study which will be based on the testing of each hypothesis. Chapter V will contain a summary, conclusions, and results. This chapter will also include recommendations for future studies.

### *Summary*

Wheelock and Miao (2005) reported that students who are stuck in the ninth grade are typically over age and allowing them to fall further behind will not help their academic achievement. These authors recommended that districts promote the transition to ninth grade by offering additional academic support to accelerate students' progress to acquire credits needed for graduation. They suggest that if these over age ninth grade students have had difficulties with attendance and discipline, they will need additional support that goes beyond academics (Whelock & Miao).

Cushman (2006) reported that students worry about the school being a place that is confusing and large, where there are more rigorous assignments, and where older students bully and haze the new, younger students. As one ninth grade student stated:

“Before, I could do one homework paper a night and still get an A. In ninth grade, there are more classes, and each class gives you double what you got in middle school. I can’t get it all done.” (Cushman, 2006, p.47)

Ninth grade transition is a most timely issue as we continue to address Standards of Learning (SOL) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the initiatives to rethink our high schools as they attempt to prepare students for the ongoing changes of the economy, workforce, and expectations of colleges and universities. The ninth grade year is the most crucial year during a student’s matriculation through high school.

## CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will provide a map that starts with the educational reform movement of accountability. School transition research will be addressed to include interventions and recommendations to improve ninth grade academic success as student's transition to high school. Also included The Smaller Learning Communities Model will highlight activities and strategies to support academic success in support of the No Child Left Behind Act.

### *History: A Nation at Risk*

This section of the paper will take a brief look at the beginning of education reform and accountability. Included will be information concerning at-risk as it relates to high school transition.

On August 21, 1981, Secretary of Education T. H. Bell established the National Commission on Excellence in Education to examine education in the United States resulting in publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* being published in April 1983. This 18- month study revealed that educational institutions in the United States had lost sight of high expectations and the basics. The article highlighted that America's position in the world was no longer secure and that a higher level of education was needed to survive. The opening sentence states "our nation is at risk" (United States Department of Education, 1983). *A Nation at Risk* pushed the educational system into an era of ongoing commentary, reform, and accountability that is evident today. The commission reported the following as indicators of the risk:

1. International comparison of student achievement, completed a decade ago reveal that on 19 academic tests American students were never first or second and, in comparison with other industrialized nations, were last seven times.

2. Some 23 million American adults are functionally illiterate by the simplest test of everyday reading, writing and comprehension.
3. About 13 percent of all 17-year-olds in the United States can be considered functionally illiterate. Functional illiteracy among minority youth may run as high as 40 percent.
4. Average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests is now lower than 26 years ago when Sputnik was launched.
5. Over half the population of gifted students do not match their tested ability with comparable achievement in school.
6. The College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT) demonstrate a virtually unbroken decline from 1963 to 1980. Average verbal scores fell over 50 points and average mathematics scores dropped nearly 40 points.
7. College Board achievement test also reveal consistent declines in recent years in such subjects as Physics and English.
8. Both the number and proportion of students demonstrating superior achievement on the SATs (i.e., those with scores of 650 or higher) have also dramatically declined.
9. Many 17-year-olds do not possess the higher order intellectual skills we should expect of them. Nearly 40 percent cannot draw inferences from written material; only one-fifth can write a persuasive essay and only one-third can solve a mathematics problem requiring several steps.
10. There was a steady decline in science achievement scores of U. S. 17- year-olds as measured by national assessments of science in 1969, 1973, and 1977.
11. Between 1975 and 1980, remedial mathematics courses in public 4-year colleges increased by 72 percent and not constitute one-quarter of all mathematics courses taught in those institutions.
12. Average tested achievement of students graduating from college is also lower.
13. Business and military leaders complain that they are required to spend millions of dollars on costly remedial education and training programs in such basic skills as reading, writing, spelling and computation. The Department of the Navy, for example, reported to the Commission that one-quarter of its recent recruits cannot read at the ninth grade level, the minimum needed simply to understand written safety instructions. Without remedial work they cannot even begin, much less complete, the sophisticated training essential in much of the modern military. (United States Department of Education, 1983, p.1)

Concerns surrounding the transition to high school from grade 8 to grade 9 are academic achievement, conduct, attendance, and gender and race. These concerns contribute to national concerns as indicated in *A Nation at Risk*. It was an urgent issue then and is now as we continue to address Standards of Learning (SOL) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the initiatives to rethink our high schools as they attempt to

prepare students for the ongoing changes of the economy, workforce, and expectations of colleges and universities.

Recommendations from *A Nation at Risk* included strengthening high school graduation requirements, establishing more rigorous standards at schools and postsecondary institutions, increasing the time committed to the New Basics, improving teaching, and holding educators accountable for needed leadership (United States Department of Education, 1983). Shortly after this report in 1983 the term “at-risk” was used often in the educational community.

Ascher (1987) suggested that if a student was an at-risk ninth grader, the ninth grade year in high school would be difficult. As a follow up to the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988, a study was conducted on the eighth grade cohort in 2000. In this study six risk factors were identified as the at-risk variable for this eighth grade cohort. For the purpose of the NELS report at-risk included having only one parent living in the house, parents completing less than a high school diploma, having an older sibling who dropped out of high school, spending three hours or more home alone after school, being limited in English proficient, and having a family income less than 15,000 annually (Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt, & Chen, 2000).

Edwards and Wallace (1993) conducted a nationwide survey to assess the effectiveness of the document *A Nation at Risk* and its implementation 10 years later. A random selection of colleges of education, school districts, individual secondary schools, and state departments of education was mailed a survey. The instrument used was prepared from the commission’s five recommendations. Their findings indicated that in the opinion of surveyed participants, public schools have only been somewhat successful

with the recommendations from the National Commission on Excellence (Edwards & Wallace, 1993). Participants made responses based on how much improvement could be attributed to *A Nation at Risk*. Edward and Wallace (1993) reported that a number of respondents believed that changes were not due to *A Nation at Risk* and recommendations were already in place.

Riley (1995) reported an increase in academic achievement and overcoming the barrier of low expectations in American education. However, concerns over drop-out rates, poverty, violence, and college freshman taking a number of remedial classes were mentioned in *Turning the Corner*. Riley (1995) announced Goals 2000 as the needed driving force for education to be prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This law addressed higher standards, technology, and high expectations. The U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, stated “we need to avoid the trap that has so often befallen American education: the inability to maintain a sustained drive for excellence” (p.3).

#### *School Transition Research*

This section highlights six empirical studies concerning ninth grade transition to high school. They will bring attention to concerns and variables surrounding the transition to high school. These studies are peer reviewed and provide crucial recommendations to ensure successful transition of ninth grade students to high school.

In their study, Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) focused on the students who entered the ninth grade for the first time into a high school with no transition program. This study focused on a survey to identify areas having the greatest influence on student success in the ninth grade as perceived by the students during February of their ninth-grade school year (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005).

The subjects for this study were students who entered the ninth grade for the first time in a large Midwest comprehensive high school with a student population of approximately 2300, grades 9-12. There were 495 ninth grade students surveyed. The population consisted of 78.3% Caucasian, 16.7% Native American, and 1.7% each for African American, Asian American, and Hispanic American students (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005). The student population is worthy of noting concerning future investigation of race surrounding transition. Twenty-three percent of the high school students received free and reduced lunch (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005).

A qualitative survey was conducted of 30 questions with a scale choice of the following: 1 “really doesn’t help”; 2 “doesn’t help”; 3 “helps” 4; “really helps”. There was one item “yes” or “no” concerning if they felt they were being successful (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005). Also included was an open-ended item asking “What do you need the most to help you make the transition to ninth grade?” There were 495 survey responses from the first-time ninth grade students with a 93.4% response rate. Each new ninth grade student completed a survey in a classroom setting monitored by a teacher (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005).

For the statement “I feel that I’m being successful at high school,” 66.1% of the students responded “yes”. “No” was given as an answer by 17.85% (87) and no response was recorded for 16.36% (81) of the respondents. For the open-ended question “What did you need the most to help you make the transition into ninth grade?” was answered by 73.5% of the participants. The top five comments given were “Nothing” (41 responses), “More help in eighth grade” (28 responses), “Support from family/friends” (19 responses), and “Teachers helping me” (16 responses). The higher the mean indicated

the students found that the item was more helpful (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005). The greatest positive influence on the transition to ninth grade as indicated by the surveyed participants were “interesting classes” and “going to class everyday” (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005). Correlation was found between academic performance and the inability of high schools to engage students (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005)

After the research study, changes implemented included block scheduling of 95-minute class periods to address the need for students to spend more time with teachers; family night for new ninth grade students in the spring of the eighth-grade year; identification badges used to promote a more personal interaction with students and teachers; and a closed campus policy. Its subsequent practice reduced the drop-out rate for all students and for ninth graders (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005).

The survey questions used in this case included pertinent topics of interest. The surveyed participants were from one of three high schools in the community; therefore the results may not be generalized for all area high schools. This is an area of weakness of this particular study. The geographical location and the size of the school also affect student responses. Students entering the ninth grade for the first time in a smaller school district located in another region may believe other factors lead to their success as they transition from the eighth to the ninth grade (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005).

Akos and Galassi (2004) investigated gender and race as variables in sixth and ninth grade students’ psychosocial adjustment following a recent school transition. Also investigated were the people who they perceived as helpful in the transition process (Akos & Galassi, 2004). All of the students came from one middle school and one high school in a medium-sized, Southeastern school district.

There were 173-sixth graders and 320-ninth graders who participated in the study, including male, female, Caucasians, African-Americans, and Latinos. The middle school sample included 83 boys, 86 girls, and 4 students who did not provide information about gender and were reported as unspecified. The middle school racial sample included: 99 Caucasian, 34 African –American, 15 Asian American 14 Latino, and 4 unspecified. The high school sample included 153 boys, 161 girls, and 6 who did not provide information concerning gender and were reported as unspecified. The high school racial sample included: 244 Caucasian, 33 African American, 18 Asian American, 11 Latino, 7 multicultural, and 6 unspecified (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

The School Transition Questionnaire (STQ) was utilized as a measure of student perceptions over the course of the transition. A Likert-type format was used concerning “how was the move from middle school to high school for you”, and “connectedness to the school”. Students were also asked about perceived helpfulness of significant persons during the transition (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

The School Transition Questionnaire (STQ) was administered during the fall semester to all sixth and ninth grade students at the participating schools. Students returned the questionnaire anonymously in each classroom (Akos & Galassi, 2004). The authors developed the questionnaire to assess a variety of information about the transition, including students’ overall feelings about the difficulty of the transition, sense of connectedness to the new schools, and persons who were most helpful to them during the transition. The response format for all areas was Likert-type (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

Data were analyzed separately for the middle and high school samples. Originally, a 2 x 4 (Gender X Race) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was planned for data

analysis. Due to low cell sizes, analysis was contraindicated and a complete separate univariate ANOVA was used to analyze gender and race differences on the variable. Bonferroni adjustment was used to control for Type 1 errors (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Significant *F* values led to post-hoc comparisons with Tukeys' Honestly Significant Differences Test to explain differences in racial categories (Akos & Galassi).

Gender differences were seen in feelings of connectedness to middle and high school following the transition. Latino students perceived the transition to middle school as significantly more difficult than did Caucasian and African American students. Overall the results revealed that students did not perceive the transition to middle school or high school was particularly difficult. The results suggest that gender and race are influential variables in school transitions and highlight potential differences in transition programming needed for different groups of students (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

Overall the results revealed that students did not perceive that the transition to middle school or high school was particularly difficult. Gender was not a significant variable in students' overall perception of the difficulty of the transition. Gender was significant in students' feelings of connectedness to school. Middle school girls felt more connected to school than did boys. Middle school boys felt significantly more connected in high school than did girls. Gender was also a significant variable in determining who was most helpful during the transition to high school. No significant differences were found for race in feelings of connectedness to school. Latino students perceived the transition as more difficult as compared with Caucasian and African American students (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

Students in this study perceived the transition as somewhat easy. The results of this study support previous research that suggests that gender and race are influential variables in school transitions and highlight potential differences in transition programming needed for different groups of students. Future studies may consider gender in assisting students' adjustment to school. Study participants also demonstrated a strong connection to school and found a variety of school personnel and other persons helpful during school transition. The results of this study demonstrate that girls felt more connected to school than did boys after transition to middle school (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

Akos & Galassi (2004) used a questionnaire once during the school year after the transition. This study reported on significant and nonsignificant issues surrounding gender and race as variables concerning transition research. Latino students may need particular attention during the transition to middle school. It is interesting to note in this study that the gender sample for middle and high school students was equitable; however, the race for the middle school sample included 57 % Caucasian and for the high school sample 76 % Caucasian . This did not provide an equitable distribution of all races. To accomplish this endeavor other high schools may need to be included. The fourteenth annual drop-out report from the NCES 2001 reflects a status dropout of 7.3 % for Caucasians, 10.9 % for Blacks, 27 % for Hispanics, and 2.3 % for Asian/Pacific Islander. The highest drop-out rates are being reported in the Hispanic population which would warrant our attention in future studies. Status dropout for males reflect 12.2 % and for females 9.3 % (Kaufman & Chapman, 2004). Future studies on this issue with a balanced sample in the area of race would strengthen the results on this issue. These

concerns contribute to national drop-out rates and the level of competitiveness students will have when facing the workforce and postsecondary opportunities. Gender and race variables are worthy considerations when investigating transition programming from eighth to ninth grade.

Fulk (2003) investigated concerns surrounding incoming ninth grade students through three phases. The stakeholders at this particular Midwestern high school facilitated focus groups to organize the three phases due to issues and concerns surrounding the 19% mobility, 5% dropout, 85% graduation rate, and the ages of the ninth grade students ranging from 13 to 16 years old. The population of this school was 88% White, 9% Black, and the remaining 3% Hispanic, Native American, or Asian. Approximately 11% of the students were considered low socioeconomic status.

Fulk (2003) reported that in phase one and two, teachers and students were surveyed to gain their perceptions of academic skills of ninth-grade students. Phase three information was gathered and used to implement activities and next steps to promote academic success of ninth grade students at this particular high school. Voluntary participants included 75 of the 94 teachers and 265 of the 296 students. The teacher surveys were designed by members of the focus group.

Results of the teacher survey showed three survey items of high agreement. Approximately 75% of the teachers indicated they required class notebooks, assigned homework, and were concerned about lack of student homework completion. Less than 52% of the teachers reported teaching test-taking skills and only 40% reported teaching note-taking skills (Faulk, 2003). From open items on the teacher survey four themes of concern regarding ninth grade organization emerged to include: poor testing skills, lack

of time management and organization, lack of motivation, and lack of homework completion. The strengths identified by the teachers of ninth grade students included: enthusiasm for learning, students wanting to make good grades, and wanting to work together in groups and to participate.

The instrument used for the ninth grade students was a 51-item survey that was divided into 8 subscales. Across the group study habits,  $M=2.94$ , and test anxiety,  $M=2.5$ , were reportedly the lowest of all subscales. Cognitive strategy, concentration/self-regulation, metacognition, and intrinsic motivation were reportedly neutral. Ninth grade students reported organization,  $M=3.7$ , and self-efficacy ( $M=3.61$ ) which were highest of all the subscales (Fulk, 2003).

Gender differences were also investigated to reflect significant differences on five of the subscales. Females scored higher on organization, test anxiety, study habits, and cognitive strategy (Fulk, 2003). The males were significantly higher than females on self-regulation. In this study female ninth grade respondents reflect a higher confidence in academics and motivation than male ninth grade students (Fulk, 2003).

As a result of phase 1 and 2 surveys, phase 3 implemented strategies to assist in ninth grade transition to high school. School visits were conducted at other high school in the state that had implemented transition programs or academies. Additional middle and high school articulation and communication took place prior to the arrival of the students. Staff development and training was provided to identify characteristics of the ninth grade population. Upperclassmen served as student leaders and mentors to ninth grade students resulting in them having positive role models. Class size was decreased from 30 students to 25 students. A summer orientation was implemented to provide students with

expectations and academic rigors they would encounter. Student planners and tutors were made available to students to promote academic organization and success. This particular Midwestern high school is attempting to develop practices and strategies to support a smooth transition for ninth grade students (Fulk, 2003).

Alspaugh (1998) suggests that there is achievement loss associated with the transition from elementary school to middle school and the transition from middle school to high school. In addition to achievement loss, a relationship between school-to-school transitions and the percentage of students who drop out of high school also impact student achievement.

The sample for this study consisted of three groups of 16 school districts for a total sample of 48 districts. The schools were primarily in rural and small town school districts. This study does not indicate if the school districts included in this study were randomly selected or not. All the districts were primarily rural with no urban districts included. Descriptive statistics for the schools were presented and implies that the schools were in different socioeconomic settings. There was no statistically significant difference reported in the expenditures per student among the three groups of schools. The purpose of the present study was to investigate the changes in achievement during the school-to-school transitions (Alspaugh, 1998).

The Missouri Mastery and Achievement Tests (MMAT) were given to students in May of each year in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. The comparisons of the individual-school-group achievement gains and losses indicate a statistically significant loss only for the middle school group. The reported p value of .054 implies that there may be some inconsistency in achievement losses among the four academic

areas. The dependent variable was the difference between the district average fifth and sixth grade achievement scores. The correlation between the school average fifth and sixth grade achievement was .50 (Alspaugh, 1998).

All three school groups were in transition to high school at ninth grade. The dependent variable for the two-way ANOVA with repeated measures on academic areas was the difference between eighth and ninth grade achievement. All three school groups experienced a mean achievement loss in the transition to high school. The comparisons of the individual school-group achievement losses indicated a statistically significant loss for both middle school groups. The combined loss in achievement for all schools during the transition to high school was statistically significant (Alspaugh, 1998).

Alspaugh (1998) also explored the relationship between school-to-school transitions and high school drop-out rates. Tukey's pairwise comparisons of the three school groups showed a statistically significant difference between the mean drop-out rates for the K-8 schools and the drop-out rates for both middle school groups. The study reported no statistically significant difference between the mean drop-out rates for the two middle school groups. The correlation of +.514 between enrollment per grade and high school drop-out rates for the sample schools is consistent with finding of other researchers. The study suggested that "further research is needed to sort out the relative influence of socioeconomic status, school size and district organization" (Alspaugh, 1998, p.22).

In this study the students attending middle schools experienced a greater achievement loss in the transition to high school than the students making the transition from a K-8 elementary school. The experience of making a previous transition did not

moderate the achievement loss during the transition to high school. The increased high school drop-out rates for the students attending middle schools may have been associated with the achievement losses and the double transitions at grades 6 and 9. The ANOVA did not indicate a statistically significant difference among the three school groups. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of other researchers in that the students placed in relatively small cohort groups for long spans of time tend to experience more desirable educational outcomes. All three-school groups experienced a mean achievement loss in the transition to high school at ninth grade (Alspaugh, 1998).

Alspaugh (1998) does not indicate if there are any transition programs in place at any of these schools to assist students. This study implies that there is a difference between the free and reduced-price lunch rates and enrollments per grade for the three school groups. This is an identified weakness of the three different school groups being in different socioeconomic settings. This study reinforces the need to give attention to the transition of ninth grade students as their academic loss and higher risk of dropout. In Missouri, the status completion rate of 18 through 24 year olds in 1998 was 92.6 % (Kaufman & Chapman, 2004). This is a significant increase from the reported 88 % in 1989. This study also suggests that students involved in a pyramid transition of multiple elementary schools into a single middle school may experience a greater achievement loss than students in a linear transition from one elementary school into one middle school. This gives consideration to multiple schools in transition may increase transition achievement loss. The findings suggest that students being placed in smaller settings or cohorts will ease the transition into high school.

Smith (1997) evaluated the effectiveness of high school transition programs on the educational progress of a nationally representative sample of young adolescents. Comparison groups for this study were defined by the type of transition programs available to students in their middle schools—students in schools with no transition program, with partial transition programs, or in schools that address student’s parents and staff uses in the transition process (Smith, 1997). An evaluation of the high school retention and high school experiences of students as a function of the type of transition program to which they had access. Finally, an investigation of the effects of high school transition programs after taking into account other characteristics of the students’ middle school was considered.

From a nationally representative sample of 1,035 public, Catholic, and private schools, approximately 30 eighth-grade students were selected at random from each school (N=26,200). Follow up surveys identified which of the students were no longer in school 4 years later and limitations were set at transition year narrowing the sample size to 7, 924 students from 702 middle schools (Smith, 1997).

National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS) data were used as the base-year, first-year, and second-year. Students also completed a cognitive test battery developed by the Educational Testing Service. The NELS included data from eighth graders and from their parents, teachers, and schools. The follow-up surveys identified which of these students were no longer in school 4 years later and again provided survey and test data on students, as well as information about the high school attended (Smith, 1997).

The two outcome measures were generated from information collected 4 years after students were in the eighth grade. Dropout status was derived from the supplemental

dropout file provided by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Independent measures considered in this analysis fell into three groups-backgrounds and home environment, eighth-grade behavior, and characteristics of the middle school attended (Smith, 1997). For home environment and demographic background, students' gender, ethnic minority status, family socioeconomic status, and parental support were considered (Smith, 1997).

The study was structured as an analysis of covariance (ANOVA); the effect of type of program was estimated on a set of outcome measures net of variables that might confound those findings. The focus was on the effects of two dummy variables that define transition programs (full program vs. no program and partial program vs. no program) on each student's outcome. The model positions these effects with no covariates, the second model incorporates the potential confounding effect of family background and demographic and the third model takes into account student differences in school engagement and academic background. The fourth model provided a companion to this program evaluation framework, taking coexisting school characteristics into account and thus disaggregating the relative impact of programs for transition from other general characteristics of middle schools (Smith, 1997).

The most prevalent practice, for both full and partial transition programs, was to have high school counselors meet with the eighth graders. The least prevalent practice was to have big brother/big sister programs matching up high school students with eighth graders to help them through the transition period (Smith, 1997). The largest difference between the full and partial programs was the use of different practices in targeting parents or staff. Socioeconomic status was the most important difference between

students who attended school with and without full transition programs. There was no significant initial differences between students' measured eighth-grade characteristic academic background, level of misbehavior, or history of being held back that would indicate that transition programs are differentially available to students who are either more or less likely to stay in school. An ANOVA structure was used to examine whether there are unique residual relationships between access to full transition program to high school and the likelihood those students have dropped out of high school 4 years after eighth grade (Smith, 1997).

This study reinforces the issue that transition to ninth grade transition needs educators' attention. Students from elementary schools have higher retention rates than those from middle schools. This study supports other research that has suggested that students do better with some type of transition program and support. This study supports that transition programs are effective in getting students to high school. Students that had a transition program available to them were less likely to drop out of high school. This study does not report what specific components were used in the successful transition settings. This would be worthy of further investigation at the national level.

Isakson and Jarvis (1999) conducted a study that employed a short-term longitudinal design to assess the adjustment of adolescents as they made the transition from junior high to high school. Measurement was taken three times--once at the end of the eighth grade and twice during ninth grade.

Eighth grade adolescents with a mean age of 13.7 are representative of the larger community in Illinois that participated in this study. The sample was mostly Caucasian, middle- class students. The population was fairly homogeneous but is representative of

many public schools in the Midwest. Forty-eight students were invited to participate.

There were 20 males and 21 females that agreed to be involved in the study. Parents of 33 students also indicated their interest in participating (Isakson & Jarvis, 1999).

In May of the eighth grade year and December and May of the ninth-grade year the following measures were administered: the Sense of School Membership Scale, the Daily Hassles Scale, the COPE, the Scale of Perceived Social Support from Friends, and measures of autonomy and support of parents to the adolescents involved in the study.

Parent well-being was assessed by asking parents of adolescents to complete the Hassles and Uplifts Scale. This was a 53-item scale assessing stressors recently experienced in situations involving one's children, job, and money. School membership was assessed using the Psychological Sense of School Membership scale (PSSM). This was an 18-item scale that measured adolescents' perceived sense of belonging in the school setting. The alphas in the current study were .90, .91, and .91 across all three times of measurement. To assess daily stressors all students completed the Daily Hassles Scale which was modified for adolescents. The alphas were .90, .87, and .75 at each time of measurement in this study. Coping strategies were measured using the COPE to assess how students handled the stressors they encountered in the eighth and ninth grades. Autonomy was measured using an autonomy scale to assess the emotional autonomy changes in adolescents. Social support from friends was assessed using Perceived Social Support from Friends (PSS-F) measuring needs form support and feedback from friends (Isakson & Jarvis, 1999).

Isakson and Jarvis (1999) administered measures to students and parents in May of the eighth-grade year and December and May of the ninth-grade year. This study

examined adjustment variables to include grade point average, attendance, and sense of school membership. The parental well-being variables include stressors, midlife identity concerns, and adaptive coping. These variables presented in this study provide a picture of how adolescents negotiate the transition into high school. Support was found for the expected decreases in grade point average (GPA). Attendance rates improved during the initial transition into high school then dropped to a significantly lower level when compared to attendance at the beginning of the ninth grade. Partial support was found for the expected increase in stressors during the transition into high school. However, stressors decreased as the students approached the end of the ninth grade year. No support was found for the expected changes in sense of school membership, autonomy, and perceived support from parents (Isakson & Jarvis, 1999).

Future research that focuses on the influence of social support from friends on academic achievement was encouraged. This longitudinal study provides additional evidence over a period of time on adjustments to high school. No threats to the longitudinal study were reported. Including a parent measures component in this study provided additional feedback on parent perceptions. This study found that increased support from friends was related to decreased grade point average. The sample size in this was small with majority of respondents being Caucasian and all from the same junior high and high school.

In their study, Sansone and Baker (1990) focused on the school experience of ninth-grade students to address the on going issues of ninth grade failure, dropout, attendance, and discipline problems. The purpose was to understand the school

experiences of ninth-grade students to gain a knowledge base of students at risk for dropping out.

This study took place in a large urban high school with 1600 student in grades 9-12. The school was one of twelve high schools in the school district. The study took place in a predominately white working class neighborhood creating a racial mix of 25% black and 75% white student population at the school the study was conducted. The school in which this study was conducted reported a 27% dropout rate for the school at the time of the study (Sansone & Baker, 1990).

Sansone and Baker (1990) conducted observations, interviews, and document reviews that were designed and conducted over the course of the school year to identify the various structures and framework the school had in place for ninth grade students. Observations of the school staffing committee were conducted. This group met on a weekly basis to review the status of problem students and developed interventions. Interviews with school personnel were also conducted. Seventeen school personnel were interviewed including the principal, two vice-principals, two social workers, five counselors, one school psychologist, and a sample of six teachers of ninth grade students. The questions for the interview protocol were specific and generated opportunities for spontaneous responses. Interview topics included school rules and structures, school personnel responsibilities within the structures, and how school rules impinged on ninth grade students (Sansone & Baker, 1990).

Interviews with ninth grade students were conducted twice during the school year (Sansone & Baker, 1990). There were 14 ninth grade students that participated in the interviews. Six students were identified as at-risk for dropping out, and eight students

selected for the ninth grade class. Of the fourteen students five were learning disabled, one in the at-risk group. Review of the students' school documents included grades, attendance information, and reports of disciplinary actions.

Sansone and Baker (1990) report that student's perceived high school as confusing. Ninth grade students' indicated that they had little understanding of how high school policies and procedures differed from middle school. Student recommendations included: make school smaller, put all ninth grade students in one building, and have more activities just for ninth grade students (Sansone & Baker, 1990). Interviews from school personnel indicate that there were three school events designed just for ninth grade students, however there were no systematic events scheduled during the school year to repeat the information. Sansone and Baker (1990) suggest this information is critical for ninth grade survival in high school. School personnel and ninth grade students indicated the difficulties surrounding schedule changes. Personnel stated that if students struggled in class they failed, misbehaved, or stopped attending school (Sansone & Baker).

Overall this study portrayed a school lacking in events that would assist ninth grade students with the transition into high school (Sansone & Baker, 1990). Sansone and Baker (1990) report that overall the orientation activities were not effective in student preparation for the transition to high school. The following recommendations came from Sansone and Baker (1990):

1. Incorporate activities designed specifically for ninth grade students.
2. Field-test information systems so that school personnel can communicate academic requirement to new students quickly. The structure for communication should take place throughout the year.

3. Create programs to ensure ninth grade student receive individual attention during crucial points during the year.
4. Schedules should be verified and updated within the first few days of school to ensure appropriate placement.
5. School personnel should identify school structures that are in place that are working.
6. Provide teachers of ninth grade student's additional support and resources.
7. Staffing committees should be established as a prevention mode for at-risk students.

### *Summary*

In summary, there were similarities and differences throughout all case studies considered. The one generalization and suggestion from all the studies was that all schools should give consideration to transition programs to promote student achievement and reduce drop-out rates. Only one study, Alspaugh (1998), suggested that pyramid transition effects achievement loss. Having multiple elementary schools going into a middle school as oppose to having linear transition.

Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) identified a population that had no prior or current transition program in place at the time of the study. The students' perception was that they were successful. It suggests ninth grade perceptions to be different regarding the transition to high school depending upon the geographic area and the size of the school. As in the study conducted by Isakson and Jarvis (1999) the small sample size of 48 students in the Midwest reflected a lower grade point average as correlated with needing support from friends.

Akos and Galassi (2004) and Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) collected data only at one point during their study. Isakson and Jarvis (1999) in a longitudinal study collected data three times—once during eighth grade and twice during ninth grade. Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) and Isakson and Jarvis (1999) reported responses of participants to include race. The Caucasian population in both cases was over 57 %. Students felt they were being successful in high school although their grades did not always reflect this perception. Hispanics reflected the greatest need for attention during the transition. NCEs reports persistent gaps between the high school dropout and completion rates among racial and ethnic groups. Whites continue to complete high school at higher rates than either Blacks or Hispanics. The status completion rate for Whites was 91 % compared to 27 % for Hispanics in 2001 (Kaufman & Chapman, 2004).

Smith (1997) and Isakson and Jarvis (1999) conducted longitudinal studies. The later study was conducted on a national level citing the effects of eighth grade on high school retention four years later. This study supports that transition programs were key in student success and graduation rates. Isakson and Jarvis (1999) included formal parental well being measures.

Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) found that the greatest positive influence on the transition to ninth grade as indicated by the surveyed participants were “interesting classes” and “going to class everyday” (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005). Correlation was found between academic performance and the inability of high schools to engage students (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005)

Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) reported subsequent changes to include the following: block scheduling of 95-minute class periods to address the need for students to spend

more time with teachers; family night for new ninth grade students in the spring of the eighth-grade year; identification badges used to promote a more personal interaction with students and teachers; and a closed campus policy and its subsequent practice reduced the drop-out rate for all students and for ninth graders (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005).

Additionally, Sansone and Baker (1990) provide seven recommendations to assist in school transition to include: ninth grade activities, information systems, specialized ninth grade attention, flexible scheduling, identified successes, staff support, and school staff committee. Similarly, Fulk (2003) reported changes were implemented after phase three of the survey to include additional articulation with students prior to students' arrival, staff development and training to identify characteristics of ninth grade students to teachers, reduction of class size, and summer orientation.

Akos and Galassi (2004) report gender being a factor in the connectedness to high school during transition. Fulk (2003) suggests that females scored higher than males on subscales in the area of organization, test anxiety, study habits, and cognitive strategy. However, males scored higher than females in the self-regulation.

Akos and Galassi (2004) reported Latino students perceived the transition to middle school as significantly more difficult than did Caucasian and African American students. These authors suggest that students did not perceive the transition to middle school or high school was particularly difficult however, the results indicate that gender and race are influential variables in school transitions and highlight potential differences in transition programming needed for different groups of students (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

Academic achievement is ultimately the goal of educators for students as they transition into the ninth grade. Alspaugh (1998) compared school-groups suggesting a statistically significant loss for both middle school groups. The combined loss in achievement for all schools during the transition to high school was statistically significant (Alspaugh, 1998).

Alspaugh (1998) states “students attending middle schools experienced a greater achievement loss in the transition to high school than did the students making the transition from a K-8 elementary school”. The experience of making a previous transition did not moderate the achievement loss during the transition to high school. The increased high school drop-out rates for the students attending middle schools may have been associated with the achievement losses and the double transitions at grades 6 and 9. The ANOVA did not indicate a statistically significant difference among the three school groups. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of other researchers in that the students placed in relatively small cohort groups for long spans of time tend to experience more desirable educational outcomes. All three-school groups experienced a mean achievement loss in the transition to high school at ninth grade (Alspaugh, 1998).

Sansone and Baker (1990) conducted a study to address the phenomenon of ninth grade failure. Based on observations, interview, and document reviews data indicated that the school was lacking in events to assist in successful transition for ninth grade students.

Smith (1997) reinforces the issue that ninth grade transition needs due attention. Students from elementary schools have higher retention rates than those from middle schools. This study suggests what other research suggests that students do better with

some type of transition programs and support. This study supports the premise that transition programs are effective in getting students through high school. Students who had a transition program available to them were less likely to drop out of high school. This study does not report what specific components were used in the successful transition settings. This would be worthy of further investigation at the national level.

Isakson and Jarvis (1999) encourages future research to focus on the influence of social support from friends on academic achievement is encouraged. This longitudinal study provides additional evidence over a period of time on adjustments to high school. No threats to the longitudinal study were reported. Including a parent measures component in this study provided additional feedback on parent perceptions. This study found that increased support from friends was related to decreased grade point average. The sample size in this was too small with majority of respondents being Caucasian and all from the same junior high and high school.

*Model: Smaller Learning Communities*

This section provides ideas on how to effectively implement smaller learning communities into high schools. The No Child Left Behind Act 2001 encouraged the use of Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) to promote academic achievement (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001). The purpose of SLC is for high schools to get needed assistance to provide the foundation for students to be academically successful. A variety of structures and strategies are outlined in *An Overview of Smaller Learning Communities in High Schools* to assist the transition into ninth grade (U.S. Department of

Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education).

One structure highlighted is the academy approach. Academies are defined as subgroups within schools that are organized around particular themes (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001). The academy approach encourages academic and real world relevance integrated into the instructional plan. The house plan structure divides students into smaller groups by content or grade levels. The purpose of the house structure is to personalize the high school experience. Usually, there is an assigned discipline plan, student government, and activities. This plan assists ninth grade students with the transition into high school (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education).

The SLCs school-within-a-school structure is typically housed within a school but is responsible to the district rather than the school's principal. This structure has its own vision, culture, students, personnel, and program (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001). The magnet program structure specializes in a particular area such as engineering, technology or arts. These programs typically have an application process and you may need to audition. Students in this program structure stay together for their core classes and take other courses with non-magnet students (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education).

*An Overview of Smaller Learning Communities in High Schools* provides specific strategies to be used with the above stated structures in order have an effective smaller

learning environment. Freshman transition activities assist middle school students entering high school to be academically successful. Several suggestions include having all first year students together, provide extra support from adults, assign upperclassman mentors, offer classes to explore the pathway to post-secondary education and career (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001). The second strategy of multiyear groups fosters relationships between students and teachers. The multiyear groups have several assigned teachers that remain with a group of students at least two years. In elementary and middle schools this is called looping (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001).

The alternative scheduling strategy allows for work-based opportunities with business partners and community leaders. Students have the opportunity to have abbreviated or lengthened school days. Block scheduling is commonly used to allow for in depth lessons and experimentations. Also having adult advocate systems in place where one adult knows each student well will promote personalization and relationships over a period of time. All faculty and staff members can fulfill and participate in this role (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001).

Teacher advisory systems organize the adults to support academic achievement and work with small groups of students. Some suggestions to support this strategy are have classes that meet weekly, meet with students one on one, assist students in developing individualized plans, and introducing postsecondary options and goals (U.S.

Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001). Academic teaming organizes teachers to share in the decision making of curriculum and instruction, discipline, and expectations. Teams meet often and have common planning to support personalization and ongoing communication. A sense of community and professional learning environment is a result of this strategy (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education).

An Overview of Smaller Learning Communities in High Schools reports that smaller schools and settings support academic achievement. It suggests that smaller schools academic achievement is commensurate or higher than larger schools (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001). Smaller schools promote academic equity between higher income and lower income families. It suggests that minority and low socioeconomic level students benefit greatly from smaller learning communities (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education).

Smaller schools are cited as preparing students for the future. Often times in smaller settings, students can focus on careers and post-secondary options. Smaller schools with block scheduling support this endeavor by allowing for adjustments and options in scheduling. The attendance is reported as higher and drop-out rates lower in smaller settings especially for minority and low socioeconomic status is better in a smaller setting (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001). Smaller schools can also

provide challenging curricula that could be supplemented with distance learning and technologies (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001).

The Ninth Grade—A Precarious Time for the Potential Dropout suggested the following strategies to retain at risk ninth grade students: increase vertical articulation between the middle school and high school, allow students to have a schedule that will promote academic success, use smaller learning communities, increase the role of homeroom teacher, have longer periods of instruction, have alternative schools as an option, make teachers aware of the ninth grade issues, implement orientation programs, offer activities prior to students arrival, implement visitations during the school year and have a middle school student shadow a high school students (Ascher, 1987).

An Overview of Smaller Learning Communities in High Schools reports that smaller schools and settings support academic achievement promotes academic equity and greatly benefits minority and low socioeconomic level students (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001).

The Smaller Learning Communities approach and school transition research suggests that transition programs be implemented to improve academic achievement and learning communities of rising ninth grade students and that gender, race, attendance, student perceptions, parental support and economic status should be included when considering components of transition programs.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This chapter focuses on the research design of the study. This chapter includes the purpose of the study, research design, and description of variables. Also included are research questions, hypotheses statements, data sources, data collection procedures, and limitations. Population and data analysis techniques will also be discussed.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to determine if specific participants in a transition program have a greater success rate, as measured by GPA, number of students recycled, attendance, and conduct, than a traditional program of study for over age, first time ninth grade students by the end of first semester of the ninth grade. The participants in this study, both transition and traditional program of study, must meet the following criteria: students must be at least 15 years old, a first time ninth grade student, a general education student, and enrolled the entire first semester.

The transition program participants were the experimental group. Transition program courses were double blocked during the first semester and included the following classes: English 9, Algebra I, and Biology. At this school, Biology is offered in ninth grade to provide additional hands on activities to keep students engaged. Transition program classes, English 9, Algebra I, and Biology, are three double blocked 90 minute classes that meet daily. This program also includes one elective class that meets for 50 minutes daily. The transition program participants have four teachers who see them on a daily basis. The program provides the core curriculum teachers with a common planning time. Transition program teachers have a smaller teaching load. The transition program also included bimonthly guidance from a school counselor.

The fidelity of the transition program was assessed during the study. Student schedules were monitored and checked regularly. During the core teachers common planning time I attended planning meetings once a week. Guidance counselors provided a schedule of bimonthly guidance dates.

The traditional program of study served as the control group. The traditional program of study had six single block 90 minute classes that meet on alternate days and one class that meets for 50 minutes daily. The traditional program of study have six different teachers that students see every other day on an AB Block schedule and one additional teacher they see every day. The traditional program of study participants have seven different teachers. The traditional program of study included access to guidance counselors.

### *Population*

The Southeastern Virginia high school in this study had an enrollment of 1703 students. The demographics include 84.3% Black, 12.9% White, 1.6% Hispanic, .6% Asian, .4% Native American, and .2% unspecified. The reported economically disadvantaged population, which is determined by free and reduced lunch, was 55.7%. The school division's database reported that there were a total of 126 over age first time ninth grade students. Forty-seven of those students were in an identified special education program and were not included in this study in an effort to compare like groups and so as not to interfere with their individualized education program (IEP). Of the remaining 79 over age first time ninth grade students 42 participated in the summer transition program and were over age first time ninth grade transition program participants. In order to be a transition program participant, students had to attend the

summer transition program. These 42 students were involved in the transition program and served as the experimental group. The remaining 37 students who did not attend summer transition and were over age first time ninth grade students were in the traditional program of study. These 37 students served as the control group. This is a self selection sample. All students were provided transportation to summer transition.

Summer transition provided students the opportunity to improve Algebra I readiness, tour facilities, meet with guidance counselors, and meet with administrators. A teacher at the school where the study was conducted facilitated the summer transition program.

During this study, participants in the transition program were asked why they attended summer transition. Students were asked to respond to the question with choices that included the following: 1 “learn the expectations of high school”; 2 make friends”; 3 “make better grades”; 4 “visit the building”; 5 “parents made me attend”. They were also provided an “other” item to provide individual response. Thirty-one students responded to the question. Of the responses 58.06% (18) stated they attended summer transition to “learn the expectations of high school”. “Make better grades” was selected by 29.03% (9). “Parents made me attend” was selected by 9.67% (3). The other item 3.22% (1) stated “I was forced”.

Participants in the traditional program of study were asked why they did not attend the summer transition program. Students were asked to respond to the question with choices that included the following: 1 “out of town”; 2 “already knew expectations of high school”; 3 “already making good grades”; 4 “attended other camps or activities”. They were also provided an “other” item to provide individual response. Twenty-three

students responded to the question. Of the responses 21.73% (5) stated they were “out of town”. “Already know expectation of high school” was selected by 8.69% (2). “Already making good grades” was selected by 8.69% (2). “Attended other camps or activities” was selected by 47.82% (11). The other item 13.04% (3) stated “moving”, “staying somewhere else”, and “family emergency”.

Prior achievement is determined by a student being previously retained at the elementary or middle school level. Prior achievement information is reported from the school division’s data base.

### *Research Design*

This study utilized a quantitative method of research. The design of this study was post-test only control group without random assignment (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). In this design one group, was the experimental group and received a treatment. The other group received no treatment and served as a control group (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). The results of this research provide information to educators to assist them in planning and implementing successful transition programs for ninth grade students. Implications of this study confirm or refute current practices of the ninth grade transition program at the studied school. The findings of this study may also be used for program improvement.

### *Variables*

The independent variable was the instructional program organizational structure: transition program or traditional program of study. Control variables included gender and race. Dependent variables were students recycled, grade point average, out of school

suspension, in school suspension, detention, and attendance. Descriptive statistics were gathered in order to compare both groups.

### *Research Questions*

Research questions for this study are as follows:

1. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact academic achievement of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of students recycled at the end of first semester?
2. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact academic achievement of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by GPA at the end of first semester?
3. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student conduct of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of referrals for out-of-school suspension at the end of first semester?
4. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student conduct of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of referrals for in-school suspension at the end of first semester?
5. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student conduct of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of referrals for detention at the end of first semester?

6. Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student attendance of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of absences students have accumulated at the end of first semester?

### *Null Hypotheses*

Based on the above research questions the following hypotheses are advanced:

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no difference in the number of students recycled who participate in the transition program and those in the traditional program of study.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in the GPA of students who participate in the transition program and those in the traditional program of study.

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no difference in the number of referrals for out-of-school suspensions of students who participate in the transition program and those in the traditional program of study.

Null Hypothesis 4: There is no difference in the number of referrals for in-school suspension of students who participate in the transition program and those in the traditional program of study,

Null Hypothesis 5: There is no difference in the number of referral for detention of students who participate in the transition program and those in the traditional program of study.

Null Hypothesis 6: There is no difference in the number of absences of students who participate in the transition program and those in the traditional program of study.

### *Data Sources*

Information was gathered from the school division's database. All data were then placed into SPSS to run descriptive statistics and independent sample t tests. The principal investigator, dissertation advisor, and co-investigator/doctoral candidate, had access to the data. First semester data were collected at the end of the semester for the purposes of this study. The school division provided information and data regarding students' grade point average, gender, race, attendance, conduct, prior achievement, and number of students recycled.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

The co-investigator was approved to conduct the study by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB). The school division in which the study was conducted also granted permission to conduct the study. The co-investigator had access to the school divisions' database eSIS. The school divisions' database provided information concerning students' age, GPA, gender, race, conduct, attendance, and prior achievement.

#### *Limitations*

The students in this study did not come from the same middle school. The different schools may have had different expectations that could have an impact on students' current academic status and conduct. Students represent one urban high school in Southeastern Virginia with a semester based credit system. Additionally, the time frame of this study is one semester thus long term impacts can not be predicted. Another limitation is that the same teachers did not teach all of the students in the transition program and the traditional program of study thus teacher expectations and grading practices can be a limitation. Students in this study self reported why they did or did not attend summer transition and the number of times they have been retained. A possible

threat to internal validity is the possible loss of respondents resulting in a low sample size (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

#### *Data Analysis Techniques*

This study examined if a transition program had a greater success, as measured by GPA, number of students recycled, attendance, and conduct, than a traditional program of study for over age, first time ninth grade students by the end of first semester of the ninth grade.

Descriptive statistics were gathered on dependent variables, GPA, number of students recycled, conduct, and attendance. The purpose of the descriptive statistics was to describe the set of data through mean scores (Cronk, 2004).

The chi-square is most commonly used to test the relationship between variables (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). The chi-square is most appropriate when reporting frequency. Chi-square test of independence was on conducted on the dependent variable- students recycled. The independent sample t-test is the most frequently used method to determine the differences in means between two groups (Basic Statistics, 2006). The independent sample t-test can also be used if sample sizes are relatively small. Independent sample t-tests were conducted on following dependent variables: grade point average, out of school suspension, in school suspension, detention, and attendance to compare means and differences of the transition program participants and the traditional program of study participants. The treatment of the transition program was compared with transition program participants and traditional program of study participants to draw conclusions concerning which mean is larger than the other, the significance level, and the means and standard deviations between the two groups.

Numeric values were utilized in statistical analysis. Additionally a cross tabulation of frequency was reported to indicate the range.

This research study was designed to determine if a transition program had a greater success than a traditional program of study. Statistical analyses were utilized to describe group statistics and compare means between the groups. All data was requested and obtained from the school divisions' database. Students self reported the number of times they were retained in the past.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to determine if specific participants in a transition program have a greater success rate, as measured by number of students recycled, GPA, conduct, and attendance, than a traditional program of study for over age, first time ninth grade students by the end of first semester of the ninth grade.

This chapter contains the statistical analysis of the data related to the six research questions and hypotheses. These data were obtained from the school division's database and placed into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. The first section represents demographic information about the students involved in the study. The following sections represent the purpose of the study, data collection and coding procedures, results, analysis, and summary.

### *Demographic Data*

The participants in this study, both transition and traditional program of study, must meet the following criteria: students must be at least 15 years old, a first time ninth grade student, general education student, and enrolled the entire first semester. There were 79 eligible over age first time ninth grade students 42 were over age first time ninth grade transition program participants. The remaining 37 were over age first time ninth grade students in the traditional program of study.

There was a loss of 11 participants in this study -6 Black females, 4 Black males, and 1 White female in the study transferred from the high school in which the study was conducted. There was a loss of six eligible transition program participants –three Black

females and three Black males. Of the six eligible transition program participants loss four transferred to a high school in the division where the study was conducted and two transferred to a high school outside of the division where the study was conducted. There was a loss of five eligible traditional program of study participants- three Black females, one White female, and one Black male. Of the five eligible traditional program participants loss three transferred to a high school in the division where the study was conducted and two transferred to a high school outside of the division where the study was conducted.

There were 68 participants in this study. Of the participants 36 were transition program participants and 32 were traditional program of study participants. Of the students in the study, 36 were female and 32 were male. Transition program participants included 20 female and 16 male. Traditional program of study participants included 16 female and 16 male. The race of students included 60 Black, 6 White, 1 Native American, and 1 Unspecified. Transition program participants included 30 Black, 4 White, 1 Native American, and 1 Unspecified. Traditional program of study participants included 30 Black and 2 White. Table 1 provides information concerning eligible and enrolled over age first time ninth grade students in the transition program and traditional program of study to include gender, race, and prior achievement.

#### *Data Collection and Coding Procedures*

Data were acquired from the school divisions' eSIS database. All data were inputted into SPSS for analysis. Sixty-eight participants were a part of this study. Coding variables inputted into SPSS are as follows: ID (numeric), Program Type (1,2), Gender (1,2), Race (1,2,3,4), GPA (numeric), Recycled (1,2), Retained (1,2), Detention

(5,4,3,2,1), ISS (5,4,3,2,1), OSS (5,4,3,2,1), and Absences (7,6,5,4,3,2,1). Table 3 provides a summary of the coding and value name used in SPSS data file.

**Table 1**

***Summary of Eligible and Enrolled Program Type: Gender, Race, and Prior Achievement***

Program Type	Gender		Race				Prior Achievement	
	Female	Male	Black	White	Native American	Unspecified	“1 time”	“2 times”
Transition								
Eligible	23	19	36	4	1	1	40	2
Enrolled	20	16	30	4	1	1	34	2
Traditional								
Eligible	20	17	34	3			36	1
Enrolled	16	16	30	2			31	1

Note: Prior achievement was determined by a student being previously retained

**Table 2*****Coding of Variables for Entry into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)***

Variable Name	Value Name	Code
ID	Numeric	Numeric
Program Type	Transition Program	1
	Traditional Program	2
Gender	Female	1
	Male	2
Race	Black	1
	White	2
	Native American	3
	Unspecified	4
GPA	Numeric	Numeric
Recycled	No	1
	Yes	2
Retained	1 time	1
	2 times	2
Detention	0 day	5
	1-2 days	4
	3-4 days	3
	5-6 days	2
	7 or more days	1
ISS	0 day	5
	1-2 days	4
	3-4 days	3
	5-6 days	2
	7 or more days	1
OSS	0 day	5
	1-2 days	4
	3-4 days	3
	5-6 days	2
	7 or more days	1
Absences	0 day	7
	1-5 days	6
	6-10 days	5
	11-15 days	4
	16-20 days	3
	21-25 days	2
	26 or more days	1

## Results

### Research Question 1

Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact academic achievement of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of students recycled at the end of first semester?

Of the 36 transition program participants two (6%) were recycled while 34 (94%) were not recycled. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants 14 (44%) were recycled 18 (56%) were not recycled. Means were calculated and it was determined that the transition group mean was lower ( $m=1.05$ ,  $sd=.23$ ) than the mean of the traditional group ( $m=1.43$ ,  $sd=.504$ ). A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing the frequency of students recycled in the transition and traditional program. A significant interaction was found ( $\chi^2(1)= 13.73$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d=-2.2$ ). Transition program students were recycled less than traditional program students. The small effect size indicated that the mean of the treated group is below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of the untreated group. The null hypothesis was rejected. Data are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

***Recycled Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation,  $\chi^2$***

Program	N	Recycled	Not Recycled	M	SD	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Transition	36	2 (6%)	34 (94%)	1.05	.23	13.73	.000
Traditional	32	14 (44%)	18 (56%)	1.43	.504		

Of the 20 female transition program participants one (5%) were recycled and 19 (95%) were not recycled. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants 3 (18%) were recycled 13(82%) were not recycled. Means were calculated and it was determined that the female transition group mean ( $m=1.05$ ,  $sd=.223$ ) was lower than the female traditional group mean ( $m=1.18$ ,  $sd=.403$ ). A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing the frequency of female students recycled in the transition and traditional program. No significant relationship was found ( $\chi^2(1) = 1.70$ ,  $p >.05$ ). Therefore, there is no significant difference between the females in the transition program and females in the traditional program being recycled. Data are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4**

***Female Recycled Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation,  $\chi^2$***

Program	N	Recycled	Not Recycled	M	SD	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Transition	20	1 (5%)	19 (95%)	1.05	.223	1.70	.221
Traditional	16	3 (18%)	13 (82%)	1.18	.403		

Of the 16 male transition program participants one (6%) were recycled and 15 (94%) were not recycled. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants 11 (69%) were recycled 5 (31%) were not recycled. Means were calculated and it was determined that the male transition group mean ( $m=1.06$ ,  $sd=.25$ ) was lower than the male traditional group mean ( $m=1.68$ ,  $sd=.47$ ). A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing the frequency of male students recycled in the transition and traditional program. A significant interaction was found ( $\chi^2(1)= 13.33$ ,  $p <.05$ ). Males in the transition program were recycled less than males in the traditional program. Data are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5*****Male Recycled Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation,  $\chi^2$*** 

Program	N	Recycled	Not Recycled	M	SD	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Transition	16	1 (6%)	15 (94%)	1.06	.25	13.33	.000
Traditional	16	11 (69%)	5 (31%)	1.68	.47		

Of the 20 female transition program participants one (5%) were recycled and 19 (95%) were not recycled. Of the 16 male transition program of study participants 1 (6%) were recycled 15 (94%) were not recycled. Means were calculated and it was determined that the female transition group mean ( $m=1.05$ ,  $sd=.223$ ) was lower than the male transition group mean ( $m=1.06$ ,  $sd=.250$ ). A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing the frequency of female and male students recycled in the transition program. No significant relationship was found ( $\chi^2(1) = .026$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Therefore, there is no significant difference between females and males in the transition program being recycled. Data are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6*****Gender of Transition Program Recycled Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation,  $\chi^2$*** 

Transition	N	Recycled	Not Recycled	M	SD	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Female	20	1 (5%)	19 (95%)	1.05	.223	.026	.698
Male	16	1 (6%)	15 (94%)	1.06	.250		

Of the 16 female traditional program participants three (18%) were recycled and 13 (82%) were not recycled. Of the 16 male traditional program participants 11 (69%) were recycled 5 (31%) were not recycled. Means were calculated and it was determined

that the female traditional group mean ( $m=1.18$ ,  $sd=.403$ ) was significantly lower than the male traditional group mean ( $m=1.68$ ,  $sd=.47$ ). A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing the frequency of female and male students recycled in the traditional program. A significant interaction was found ( $\chi^2(1)= 8.12$ ,  $p <.05$ ). Females in the traditional program were recycled less than males in the traditional program. Data are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7**

***Gender of Traditional Program Recycled Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation,  $\chi^2$***

Traditional	N	Recycled	Not Recycled	M	SD	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Female	16	3 (18%)	13 (82%)	1.18	.403	8.12	.006
Male	16	11 (69%)	5 (31%)	1.68	.47		

*Research Question 2*

Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact academic achievement of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by GPA at the end of first semester?

Of the 36 transition program participants eight (22%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Thirteen (36%) transition program participants earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Fourteen (39%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. One (3%) transition program participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the transition program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants seven (22%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Eleven (34%) earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Thirteen (41%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. One (3%) traditional program of study participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of

4.0 or higher “A”. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the transition group ( $m=1.54$ ,  $sd=.85$ ) was not significantly different from the mean of the traditional group ( $m=1.69$ ,  $sd=.78$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing GPA mean scores of transition and traditional groups. No significant difference was found ( $t(66)= -.741$ ,  $p>.05$ ,  $d=-0.1$ ). The small effect size indicated that the mean of the treated group is below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of the untreated group. The null hypothesis was accepted. Data are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8**

***GPA Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Program	N	0-.99	1.0-1.99	2.0-2.99	3.0-3.99	M	SD	$t$	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	36	8 (22%)	13 (36%)	14 (39%)	1 (3%)	1.54	.85	-.741	.461
Traditional	32	7 (22%)	11 (34%)	13 (41%)	1 (3%)	1.69	.78		

Of the 20 female transition program participants five (25%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Eight (40%) female transition program participants earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Seven (35%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. None of the female transition program participants earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the female transition program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants three (19%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Three (19%) earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Nine (56%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. One (6%) female traditional program of study participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the female traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of female transition group ( $m=1.37$ ,  $sd=.87$ ) was lower than the mean of female traditional group ( $m=1.94$ ,  $sd=.81$ ). An

independent-samples *t* test was calculated comparing GPA mean scores of female transition and traditional groups. No significant difference was found in GPA means of females in the transition and traditional program of study ( $t(34) = -2.0, p > .05$ ). Data are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9**

<i>Female GPA Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test</i>									
Program	N	0-.99	1.0-1.99	2.0-2.99	3.0-3.99	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	20	5 (25%)	8 (40%)	7 (35%)		1.37	.87	-2.0	.053
Traditional	16	3 (19%)	3 (19%)	9 (56%)	1 (6%)	1.94	.81		

Of the 16 male transition program participants three (19%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Five (31%) male transition program participants earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Seven (44%) male transition program participants earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. One (6%) male transition program participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the male transition program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants four (25%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Eight (50%) traditional program males earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Four (25%) traditional program males earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. None of the male traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of 3.0 -3.99 “B”. None of the male traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of male transition group ( $m=1.76, sd=.797$ ) was higher than the mean of male traditional group ( $m=1.44, sd=.688$ ). An independent-samples *t* test was calculated comparing GPA mean scores of male transition and traditional groups. No Significant difference was found in GPA means of males in the transition program and traditional program ( $t(30) = 1.20, p > .05$ ). Data are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10**

<b>Male GPA Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test</b>									
Program	N	0-.99	1.0-1.99	2.0-2.99	3.0-3.99	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	16	3 (19%)	5 (31%)	7 (44%)	1 (6%)	1.76	.797	1.20	.236
Traditional	16	4 (25%)	8 (50%)	4 (25%)		1.44	.688		

Of the 20 female transition program participants five (25%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Eight (40%) female transition program participants earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Seven (35%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. None of the female transition program participants earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the female transition program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Of the 16 male transition program participants three (19%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Five (31%) earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Seven (44%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. One (6%) male transition program participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the male transition program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female transition group ( $m=1.37$ ,  $sd=.87$ ) was lower than the mean of male transition group ( $m=1.76$ ,  $sd=.79$ ). An independent-samples *t* test was calculated comparing GPA mean scores of female and male transition groups and no significant difference was found ( $t(34)=-1.39$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Data are presented in Table 11.

**Table 11**

<b>Gender of Transition Program GPA Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test</b>									
Transition	N	0-.99	1.0-1.99	2.0-2.99	3.0-3.99	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
Female	20	5 (25%)	8 (40%)	7 (35%)		1.37	.87	-1.39	.173
Male	16	3 (19%)	5 (31%)	7 (44%)	1 (6%)	1.76	.79		

Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants three (19%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Three (19%) female traditional program participants earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Nine (56%) female traditional program participants earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. One (6%) female traditional program participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the female traditional program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants four (25%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Eight (50%) traditional program males earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Four (25%) traditional program males earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. None of the male traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of 3.0 -3.99 “B”. None of the male traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of female traditional group ( $m=1.94$ ,  $sd=.814$ ) was higher than the mean of male traditional group ( $m=1.44$ ,  $sd=.688$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing GPA mean scores of female and male traditional groups. No Significant difference was found in GPA means of females and males in the traditional program ( $t(30)= 1.85$ ,  $p >.05$ ). Data are presented in Table 12.

**Table 12**

***Gender of Traditional Program GPA Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Traditional	N	0-.99	1.0-1.99	2.0-2.99	3.0-3.99	M	SD	$t$	Sig.(2-tailed)
Female	16	3 (19%)	3 (19%)	9 (56%)	1 (6%)	1.94	.814	1.85	.073
Male	16	4 (25%)	8 (50%)	4 (25%)		1.44	.688		

*Research Question 3*

Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student conduct of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of referrals for out-of-school suspension at the end of first semester?

Of the 36 transition program participants 12 (33%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 24 (67%) received 0 day of OSS. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants one (3%) received 3-4 days of OSS, 12 (38%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 19 (59%) received 0 day of OSS. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the transition group ( $m=4.66, sd=.47$ ) was higher than the mean of the traditional group ( $m=4.56, sd=.56$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing OSS mean scores of transition and traditional groups. No significant difference was found between transition and traditional programs assigned OSS ( $t(66)=.824, p>.05, d=0.1$ ). The small effect size indicated that the mean of the treated group is at 54<sup>th</sup> percentile of the untreated group. The null hypothesis was accepted. Data are presented in Table 13.

**Table 13**

***OSS Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Program	N	3-4 days	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	$t$	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	36		12 (33%)	24 (67%)	4.66	.47	.824	.413
Traditional	32	1 (3%)	12 (38%)	19 (59%)	4.56	.56		

Of the 20 female transition program participants seven (35%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 13 (65%) received 0 day of OSS. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants five (31%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 11 (69%) received 0 day of OSS. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female transition group

( $m=4.65$ ,  $sd=.489$ ) was lower than the mean of the female traditional group ( $m=4.68$ ,  $sd=.478$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing OSS mean scores of female transition and traditional groups. No significant difference was found between females in transition and traditional programs being assigned OSS ( $t(34)=-.231$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Data are presented in Table 14.

**Table 14**

***Female OSS Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Program	N	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	$t$	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	20	7 (35%)	13 (65%)	4.65	.489	-.231	.819
Traditional	16	5 (31%)	11 (69%)	4.68	.478		

Of the 16 male transition program participants four (35%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 12 (65%) received 0 day of OSS. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4 days of OSS. Seven (44%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 8 (50%) received 0 day of OSS. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the male transition group ( $m=4.75$ ,  $sd=.447$ ) was higher than the mean of the male traditional group ( $m=4.43$ ,  $sd=.629$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing OSS mean scores of male transition and traditional groups. No significant difference was found between males in transition and traditional programs being assigned OSS ( $t(30)=.972$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Data are presented in Table 15.

**Table 15*****Male OSS Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Program	N	3-4 days	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	16		4 (35%)	12 (65%)	4.75	.447	.972	.339
Traditional	16	1 (6%)	7 (44%)	8 (50%)	4.43	.629		

Of the 20 female transition program participants seven (35%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 13 (65%) received 0 day of OSS. Of the 16 male transition program participants five (31%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 11 (69%) received 0 day of OSS. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female transition group ( $m=4.65$ ,  $sd=.489$ ) was higher than the mean of the male transition group ( $m=4.68$ ,  $sd=.478$ ). An independent-samples *t* test was calculated comparing OSS mean scores of female and male transition groups. No significant difference was found between females and males in the transition program being assigned OSS ( $t(34)=-.231$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Data are presented in Table 16.

**Table 16*****Gender of Transition Program OSS Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Transition	N	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
Female	20	7 (35%)	13 (65%)	4.65	.489	-.231	.819
Male	16	5 (31%)	11 (69%)	4.68	.478		

Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants five (31%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 11 (69%) received 0 day of OSS. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4 days of OSS. Seven (44%) received 1-2 days

of OSS and 8 (50%) received 0 day of OSS. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female traditional group ( $m=4.68$ ,  $sd=.478$ ) higher than the mean of the male traditional group ( $m=4.43$ ,  $sd=.629$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing OSS mean scores of female and male traditional program groups. No significant difference was found between females and males in the traditional program of study being assigned OSS ( $t(30)=1.26$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Data are presented in Table 17.

**Table 17**

***Gender of Traditional Program OSS Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Traditional	N	3-4 days	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	$t$	Sig.(2-tailed)
Female	16		5 (31%)	11 (69%)	4.68	.478	1.26	.216
Male	16	1 (6%)	7 (44%)	8 (50%)	4.43	.629		

*Research Question 4*

Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student conduct of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of referrals for in-school suspension at the end of first semester?

Of the 36 transition program participants 11(31%) received 1-2 days of ISS and 25(69%) received 0 day of ISS. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants two (6%) received 3-4 days of ISS, seven (22%) received 1-2 days of ISS, and 23 (72%) received 0 day of OSS. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the transition group ( $m=4.69$ ,  $sd=.46$ ) was not significantly different from the mean of the traditional group ( $m=4.65$ ,  $sd=.60$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing ISS mean scores of transition and traditional groups. No significant

difference was found ( $t(66)=.294, p>.05, d=0.0$ ). The small effect size indicated that the mean of the treated group is at 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of the untreated group. The null hypothesis was accepted. Data are presented in Table 18.

**Table 18**

*ISS Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test*

Program	N	3-4 days	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	36		11 (31%)	25 (69%)	4.69	.46	.294	.770
Traditional	32	2 (6%)	7 (22%)	23 (72%)	4.65	.60		

Of the 20 female transition program participants seven (35%) received 1-2 days of ISS and 13(65%) received 0 day of ISS. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4 days of ISS, two (13%) received 1-2 days of ISS, and 13 (81%) received 0 day of ISS. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female transition group ( $m=4.65, sd=.489$ ) was lower than the mean of the female traditional group ( $m=4.75, sd=.577$ ). An independent-samples *t* test was calculated comparing ISS mean scores of female transition and traditional groups. No significant difference was found between females in the transition and traditional programs being assigned ISS ( $t(34)=-.563, p>.05$ ). Data are presented in Table 19.

**Table 19**

*Female ISS Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test*

Program	N	3-4 days	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	20		7 (35%)	13 (65%)	4.65	.489	-.563	.577
Traditional	16	1 (6%)	2 (13%)	13 (81%)	4.75	.577		

Of the 16 male transition program participants four (25%) received 1-2 days of ISS and 12 (75%) received 0 day of ISS. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4 days of ISS, five (31%) received 1-2 days of ISS, and 10 (62%) received 0 day of ISS. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the male transition group ( $m=4.75, sd=.447$ ) was higher than the male traditional group ( $m=4.56, sd=.629$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing ISS mean scores of male transition and traditional groups. No significant difference was found between males in the transition and traditional programs being assigned ISS ( $t(30)=.972, p>.05$ ). Data are presented in Table 20,

**Table 20**

***Male ISS Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Program	N	3-4 days	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	$t$	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	16		4 (25%)	12 (75%)	4.75	.447	.972	.339
Traditional	16	1 (6%)	5 (31%)	10 (62%)	4.56	.629		

Of the 20 female transition program participants seven (35%) received 1-2 days of ISS and 13(65%) received 0 day of ISS. Of the 16 male transition program participants four (25%) received 1-2 days of ISS and 12 (75%) received 0 day of ISS. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female transition group ( $m=4.65, sd=.489$ ) was lower than the mean of the male transition group ( $m=4.75, sd=.577$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing ISS mean scores of female and male transition groups. No significant difference was found between female and male transition groups being assigned ISS ( $t(34)=-.563, p>.05$ ). Data are presented in Table 21.

**Table 21**

***Gender of Transition Program ISS Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Transition	N	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Female	20	7 (35%)	13 (65%)	4.65	.489	-.633	.531
Male	16	4 (25%)	12 (75%)	4.75	.577		

Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4 days of ISS. Two (13%) female traditional participants received 1-2 days of ISS and 13 (81%) received 0 day of ISS. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4 days of ISS, five (31%) received 1-2 days of ISS, and 10 (62%) received 0 day of ISS. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female traditional group ( $m=4.75, sd=.577$ ) was higher than the mean of the male traditional group ( $m=4.56, sd=.629$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing ISS mean scores of female and male traditional groups. No significant difference was found between female and male traditional program groups being assigned ISS ( $t(30)=.878, p>.05$ ). Data are presented in Table 22.

**Table 22**

***Gender of Traditional Program ISS Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Traditional	N	3-4 days	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Female	16	1 (6%)	2 (13%)	13 (81%)	4.75	.577	.878	.387
Male	16	1 (6%)	5 (31%)	10 (62%)	4.56	.629		

*Research Question 5*

Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student conduct of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of referrals for detention at the end of first semester?

Of the 36 transition program participants 10 (28%) received 1-2 days of detention and 26 (72%) received 0 day of detention. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants two (6%) received 1-2 days of detention and 30 (94%) received 0 day of detention. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the transition group was lower ( $m=4.72$ ,  $sd=.454$ ) than the mean of the traditional group ( $m=4.93$ ,  $sd=.245$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test comparing detention mean scores of the transition and traditional program found a significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(66) = -2.38$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d=0.5$ ). Therefore, there is a significant difference between the transition and traditional groups. Traditional program students were assigned detention less than transition program students. The medium effect size indicated that the mean of the treated group is at 69<sup>th</sup> percentile of the untreated group. The null hypothesis was rejected. Data are presented in Table 23.

**Table 23**

***Detention Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Program	N	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	$t$	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	36	10 (28%)	26 (72%)	4.72	.454	-2.38	.020
Traditional	32	2 (6%)	30 (94%)	4.93	.245		

Of the 20 female transition program participants 6 (30%) received 1-2 days of detention and 14 (70%) received 0 day of detention. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 1-2 days of detention and 15 (94%) received 0 day of detention. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female transition group was lower ( $m=4.70$ ,  $sd=.470$ ) than the mean of the female traditional group ( $m=4.93$ ,  $sd=.25$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test comparing detention

mean scores of female transition and traditional programs found no significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(34) = -1.82, p > .05$ ). Therefore, there is no significant difference in assigned detention of females in the transition program or traditional program. Data are presented in Table 24.

**Table 24**

***Female Detention Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Program	N	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	20	6 (30%)	14 (70%)	4.70	.470	-1.82	.077
Traditional	16	1 (6%)	15 (94%)	4.93	.250		

Of the 16 male transition program participants 4 (30%) received 1-2 days of detention and 12 (70%) received 0 day of detention. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 1-2 days of detention and 15 (94%) received 0 day of detention. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the male transition group was lower ( $m=4.75, sd=.447$ ) than the mean of the male traditional group ( $m=4.93, sd=.25$ ). An independent-samples *t* test comparing detention mean scores of male transition and traditional programs found no significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(30) = -1.46, p > .05$ ). Therefore, there is no significant difference in assigned detention of males in the transition program or traditional program. Data are presented in Table 25.

**Table 25**

***Male Detention Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Program	N	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
Transition	16	4 (30%)	12 (70%)	4.75	.447	-1.46	.154
Traditional	16	1 (6%)	15 (94%)	4.93	.250		

Of the 20 female transition program participants 6 (30%) received 1-2 days of detention and 14 (70%) received 0 day of detention. Of the 16 male transition program participants four (25%) received 1-2 days of detention and 12 (75%) received 0 day of detention. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female transition group was lower ( $m=4.70$ ,  $sd=.470$ ) than the mean of the male transition group ( $m=4.75$ ,  $sd=.447$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test comparing detention mean scores of female and male programs found no significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(34) = -.324$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Therefore, there is no significant difference in assigned detention of females and males in the transition program. Data are presented in Table 26.

**Table 26**

***Gender of Transition Program Detention Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation,  $t$  test***

Transition	N	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	$t$	Sig.(2-tailed)
Female	20	6 (30%)	14 (70%)	4.70	.470	-.324	.748
Male	16	4 (25%)	12 (75%)	4.75	.447		

Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 1-2 days of detention and 15 (94%) received 0 day of detention. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 1-2 days of detention and 15 (94%) received 0 day of detention. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female traditional group was the same ( $m=4.75$ ,  $sd=.447$ ) as the mean of the male traditional group ( $m=4.93$ ,  $sd=.25$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test comparing detention mean scores of male transition and traditional programs found no significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(30) = .000$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Therefore, there is no

significant difference in assigned detention of females and males in the traditional program. Data are presented in Table 27.

**Table 27**

***Gender of Traditional Program Detention Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Traditional	N	1-2 days	0 day	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.(2-tailed)
Female	16	1 (6%)	15(94%)	4.93	.250	.000	1.0
Male	16	1 (6%)	15 (94%)	4.93	.250		

*Research Question 6*

Does the instructional program organizational structure, transition or traditional, impact student attendance of over age first time ninth grade students as measured by the number of absences students have accumulated at the end of first semester?

Of the 36 transition program participants four (11%) were absent 26 or more days, two (6%) were absent 21-25 days, two (6%) were absent 16-20 days, four (11%) were absent 11-15 days, nine (25%) were absent 6-10 days, 11(31%) were absent 1-5 days, and three (8%) were absent 0 day. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants one (3%) were absent 26 or more days, two (6%) were absent 16-20 days, five (16%) were absent 11-15 days, three (9%) were absent 6-10 days, 14 (44%) were absent 1-5 days, and seven (22%) were absent 0 day. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the traditional group ( $m=5.43, sd=.1.47$ ) was higher than the mean of transition group ( $m=4.61, sd=.1.74$ ). An independent-samples *t* test was calculated comparing absence mean scores of transition and traditional groups found a significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(66)=-2.09, p <.05, d=-0.5$ ). The traditional group were absent less than the transition group. The small effect size indicated that the mean of

the treated group is below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of the untreated group. The null hypothesis was rejected. Data are presented in Table 28.

**Table 28**

*Absence Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test*

Program	N	26 or more days	21-25 days	16-20 days	11-15 days	6-10 days	1-5 days	0 day	M	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Transition	36	4 (11%)	2 (6%)	2 (6%)	4 (11%)	9 (25%)	11 (31%)	3 (8%)	4.61	1.74	-2.09	.040
Traditional	32	1 (3%)		2 (6%)	5 (16%)	3 (9%)	14 (44%)	7 (22%)	5.43	1.47		

Of the 20 female transition program participants three (15%) were absent 26 or more days, two (10%) were absent 21-25 days, one (5%) were absent 16-20 days, one (5%) were absent 11-15 days, six (30%) were absent 6-10 days, seven (35%) were absent 1-5 days, and none were absent 0 day. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) were absent 16-20 days, one (6%) were absent 11-15 days, one (6%) were absent 6-10 days, eight (50%) were absent 1-5 days, and five (31%) were absent 0 day. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female transition group ( $m=4.30$ ,  $sd=.1.89$ ) was lower than the mean of female traditional group ( $m=5.93$ ,  $sd=.1.12$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing absence mean scores of females in transition and traditional groups. A significant difference was found between the means of females in the transition and traditional groups ( $t(34)=-3.05$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The females in the traditional group were absent less than the females in the transition group. Data are presented in Table 29.

**Table 29**

***Female Absence Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Program	N	26 or more days	21-25 days	16-20 days	11-15 days	6-10 days	1-5 days	0 day	M	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Transition	20	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	6 (30%)	7 (35%)		4.30	1.89	-3.05	.004
Traditional	16			1 (6%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	8 (50%)	5 (31%)	5.93	1.12		

Of the 16 male transition program participants one (6%) were absent 21-25 days, one (6%) were absent 16-20 days, five (31%) were absent 11-15 days, two (13%) were absent 6-10 days, four (25%) were absent 1-5 days, and three (19%) were absent 0 day. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) were absent 26 or more days, two (13%) were absent 16-20 days, three (19%) were absent 11-15 days, two (13%) were absent 6-10 days, six (37%) were absent 1-5 days, and two (13%) were absent 0 day. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the male transition group ( $m=5.0$ ,  $sd=.1.50$ ) was higher than the male traditional group ( $m=4.93$ ,  $sd=.1.65$ ). An independent-samples  $t$  test was calculated comparing absence mean scores of male transition and traditional groups found no significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(30)=.112$ ,  $p> .05$ ). There was no significant difference of absenteeism of male transition program and traditional program participants. Data are presented in Table 30.

**Table 30**

***Male Absence Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Program	N	26 or more days	21-25 days	16-20 days	11-15 days	6-10 days	1-5 days	0 day	M	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Transition	16		1 (6%)	1 (6%)	5 (31%)	2 (13%)	4 (25%)	3 (19%)	5.0	1.50	.112	.912
Traditional	16	1 (6%)		2 (13%)	3 (19%)	2 (13%)	6 (37%)	2 (13%)	4.93	1.65		

Of the 20 female transition program participants three (15%) were absent 26 or more days, two (10%) were absent 21-25 days, one (5%) were absent 16-20 days, one (5%) were absent 11-15 days, six (30%) were absent 6-10 days, seven (35%) were absent 1-5 days, and none were absent 0 day. Of the 16 male transition program participants one (6%) were absent 21-25 days, one (6%) were absent 16-20 days, five (31%) were absent 11-15 days, two (13%) were absent 6-10 days, four (25%) were absent 1-5 days, and three (19%) were absent 0 day. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female transition group ( $m=4.30$ ,  $sd=.1.89$ ) was lower than the mean of male transition group ( $m=5.00$ ,  $sd=.1.50$ ). An independent-samples *t* test was calculated comparing absence mean scores of female and male transition groups. No significant difference was found between female and males in the transition group being absent ( $t(34)=-3.05$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Data are presented in Table 31.

**Table 31**

***Gender of Transition Program Absence Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Transition	N	26 or more days	21-25 days	16-20 days	11-15 days	6-10 days	1-5 days	0 day	M	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Female	20	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	6 (30%)	7 (35%)		4.30	1.89	-3.05	.237
Male	16		1 (6%)	1 (6%)	5 (31%)	2 (13%)	4 (25%)	3 (19%)	5.0	1.50		

Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) were absent 16-20 days, one (6%) were absent 11-15 days, one (6%) were absent 6-10 days, eight (50%) were absent 1-5 days, and five (31%) were absent 0 day. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) were absent 26 or more days, two (13%) were absent 16-20 days, three (19%) were absent 11-15 days, two (13%) were absent 6-10 days, six (37%) were absent 1-5 days, and two (13%) were absent 0 day. Means were calculated and it was determined that the mean of the female traditional group ( $m=5.93$ ,  $sd=.1.12$ ) was higher than the male traditional group ( $m=4.93$ ,  $sd=.1.65$ ). An independent-samples *t* test was calculated comparing absence mean scores of female and male traditional groups. No significant difference was found between the means of female and male traditional groups being absent ( $t(30)=2.00$ ,  $p> .054$ ). Data are presented in Table 32.

**Table 32**

***Gender of Traditional Program Absence Raw Numbers, Mean, Standard Deviation, t test***

Traditional	N	26 or more days	21-25 days	16-20 days	11-15 days	6-10 days	1-5 days	0 day	M	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Female	16		1 (6%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	8 (50%)	5 (31%)		5.93	1.12	<b>2.0</b>	.054
Male	16	1 (6%)	2 (13%)	3 (19%)	2 (13%)	6 (37%)	2 (13%)		4.93	1.65		

*Summary*

In three of the six research hypotheses, the null hypotheses were accepted. There was no statistically significant difference in the mean of transition and traditional participants GPA, referrals for out-of school suspension, and referrals for in-school suspension.

In the case of research hypothesis one the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in transition and traditional participants' recycled. In the case of research hypothesis five the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in the transition and traditional participants' referrals for detention. In the case of research hypothesis six the null hypotheses was rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in the transition and traditional participants' number of absences.

In the case of research question one a statistically significant difference occurred concerning males in the transition and traditional program being recycled. Additionally a statistically significant difference occurred concerning female and males in the traditional program being recycled. In the case of research question six a statistically significant

difference occurred concerning absences of females in the transition and traditional program.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a summary of the findings resulting from analyzing the data gathered. Conclusions drawn from the findings are also discussed. Recommendations based on the study are presented. The chapter is organized into the following sections: summary of findings, recommendations, limitations, implications for further study, and conclusions.

The purpose of this study was to determine if a transition program has a greater success rate as measured by number of students recycled, GPA, conduct, and attendance than a traditional program of study for over age, first time ninth grade students by the end of first semester of the ninth grade. The participants in this study, both transition and traditional program of study, met the following criteria: students must be at least 15 years old, a first time ninth grade student, a general education student, and enrolled the entire first semester.

### *Summary of Findings*

- The transition program was effective in reducing the number of students recycled.

Of the 36 transition program participants two (6%) were recycled 34 (94%) were not recycled. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants 14 (44%) were recycled 18 (56%) were not recycled. The difference was significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Warner (2005) reports grade retention in Virginia as the highest in grade 9 at 13 percent. Virginia Department of Education concludes that

students are put back in ninth grade or “recycled” making the ninth grade the largest grade level in the high school (Warner, 2005).

- The transition program had little impact on female students being recycled when compared with female students in the traditional program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants one (5%) were recycled and 19 (95%) were not recycled. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants 3 (18%) were recycled 13 (82%) were not recycled.

In their study, Akos and Galassi (2004) suggest gender was not a significant variable in students’ overall perception of the difficulty of the transition.

- The transition program was effective in reducing the number of male students recycled as compared with males in the traditional program.

Of the 16 male transition program participants one (6%) were recycled and 15 (94%) were not recycled. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants 11 (69%) were recycled 5 (31%) were not recycled. Males in the transition program were recycled less than males in the traditional program. The difference was significant at the .05 level.

In their study, Akos and Galassi (2004) suggest gender differences as influential variables requiring different transition programming.

- The transition program had little impact on male students being recycled when compared with female students in the transition program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants one (5%) were recycled and 19 (95%) were not recycled. Of the 16 male transition program of study participants 1 (6%) were recycled 15 (94%) were not recycled.

Fulk (2003) investigated gender differences to reflect significant differences on five of the subscales. Of the five subscales males were significantly higher than females on self-regulation.

- The traditional program was effective in reducing the number of female students recycled when compared with male students in the traditional program.

Of the 16 female traditional program participants three (18%) were recycled and 13 (82%) were not recycled. Of the 16 male traditional program participants 11 (69%) were recycled 5 (31%) were not recycled.

Fulk (2003) suggests significant gender differences with females scoring higher on organization ( $z=-2.082, p=.37$ ), test anxiety ( $z=-3.393, p=.001$ ), study habits ( $z=-3.384, p=.001$ ), and cognitive strategy ( $z=-2.050, p=.040$ ).

- The transition program had little impact on students' GPA.

Although there was some difference in the GPA there was no significant difference favoring the traditional program. Of the 36 transition program participants eight (22%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 "F". Thirteen (36%) transition program participants earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 "D". Fourteen (39%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 "C". One (3%) transition

program participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the transition program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants seven (22%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Eleven (34%) earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Thirteen (41%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. One (3%) traditional program of study participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Alspaugh (1998) suggests that there is achievement loss associated with the transition from middle school to high school. In addition to achievement loss, a relationship between school-to-school transitions and the percentage of students who drop out of high school also impact student achievement.

- The transition program had little impact on female students’ GPA when compared with females in the traditional program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants five (25%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Eight (40%) female transition program participants earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Seven (35%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. None of the female transition program participants earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the female transition program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants three (19%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Three (19%) earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Nine (56%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. One

(6%) female traditional program of study participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the female traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”.

Fulk (2003) suggests females score higher on organization, test anxiety, study habit, and cognitive strategy.

- The transition program had little impact on male students’ GPA when compared with male students in the traditional program.

Of the 16 male transition program participants three (19%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Five (31%) male transition program participants earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Seven (44%) male transition program participants earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. One (6%) male transition program participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the male transition program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants four (25%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Eight (50%) traditional program males earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Four (25%) traditional program males earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. None of the male traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of 3.0 -3.99 “B”. None of the male traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”.

Fulk (2003) suggests significant gender differences with males scoring lower on organization ( $z=-2.082, p=.37$ ), test anxiety ( $z=-3.393, p=.001$ ), study habits ( $z=-3.384, p=.001$ ), and cognitive strategy ( $z=-2.050, p=.040$ ).

- The transition program had little impact on female students' GPA when compared with male students' GPA in the transition program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants five (25%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 "F". Eight (40%) female transition program participants earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 "D". Seven (35%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 "C". None of the female transition program participants earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 "B". None of the female transition program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher "A". Of the 16 male transition program participants three (19%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 "F". Five (31%) earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 "D". Seven (44%) earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 "C". One (6%) male transition program participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 "B". None of the male transition program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher "A".

Akos and Galassi (2004) suggest that gender is not a significant variable in students' perception of the difficulty of the transition. In contrast Fulk (2003) suggests that female ninth grade respondents reflect a higher confidence in academics and motivation than male ninth grade students.

- The traditional program had little impact on female and male students' GPA.

Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants three (19%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 "F". Three (19%) female traditional program participants earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 "D". Nine (56%) female traditional program participants earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 "C". One (6%)

female traditional program participant earned a GPA of 3.0-3.99 “B”. None of the female traditional program participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants four (25%) earned a GPA of 0-.99 “F”. Eight (50%) traditional program males earned a GPA of 1.0-1.99 “D”. Four (25%) traditional program males earned a GPA of 2.0-2.99 “C”. None of the male traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of 3.0 -3.99 “B”. None of the male traditional program of study participants earned a GPA of 4.0 or higher “A”.

In their study, Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) reported that in a school with no transition program for the open-ended question “What did you need the most to help you make the transition into ninth grade?” the top five comments included “nothing”, “more help in eighth grade”, “support from family/friends”, and “teachers helping me.”

- The transition program had little impact on students’ OSS referrals.

Although there was some difference in OSS referrals there was no significant difference favoring the transition program. Of the 36 transition program participants 12 (33%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 24 (67%) received 0 day of OSS. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants one (3%) received 3-4 days of OSS, 12 (38%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 19 (59%) received 0 day of OSS. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Sansone and Baker (1990) suggest that if students struggled in class they misbehaved.

- The transition program had little impact on female students assigned OSS when compared with female students in the traditional program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants seven (35%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 13 (65%) received 0 day of OSS. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants five (31%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 11 (69%) received 0 day of OSS.

In their study, Akos and Galassi (2004) suggest that girls are less connected in high school during transition.

- The transition program had little impact on male students assigned OSS when compared with male students in the traditional program.

Of the 16 male transition program participants four (35%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 12 (65%) received 0 day of OSS. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4 days of OSS. Seven (44%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 8 (50%) received 0 day of OSS.

In their study, Akos and Galassi (2004) suggest that boys are more connected in high school during transition.

- The transition program had little impact on female students assigned OSS when compared to male students in the transition program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants seven (35%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 13 (65%) received 0 day of OSS. Of the 16 male transition program participants five (31%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 11 (69%) received 0 day of OSS.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- The traditional program had little impact on female and male students assigned OSS.

Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants five (31%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 11 (69%) received 0 day of OSS. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4 days of OSS. Seven (44%) received 1-2 days of OSS and 8 (50%) received 0 day of OSS.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- The transition program had little impact on students' ISS referrals.

Although there was some difference in ISS referrals there was no significant difference favoring the transition program. Of the 36 transition program participants 11(31%) received 1-2 days of ISS and 25(69%) received 0 day of ISS. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants two (6%) received 3-4 days of ISS, seven (22%) received 1-2 days of ISS, and 23 (72%) received 0 day of OSS. The null hypothesis was accepted.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- The transition program had little impact on female students assigned ISS when compared with females in the traditional program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants seven (35%) received 1-2 days of ISS and 13 (65%) received 0 day of ISS. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4

days of ISS, two (13%) received 1-2 days of ISS, and 13 (81%) received 0 day of ISS.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- The transition program had little impact on male students assigned ISS when compared with males in the traditional program.

Of the 16 male transition program participants four (25%) received 1-2 days of ISS and 12 (75%) received 0 day of ISS. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4 days of ISS, five (31%) received 1-2 days of ISS, and 10 (62%) received 0 day of ISS.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- The transition program had little impact on female students assigned ISS when compared with males in the transition program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants seven (35%) received 1-2 days of ISS and 13(65%) received 0 day of ISS. Of the 16 male transition program participants four (25%) received 1-2 days of ISS and 12 (75%) received 0 day of ISS.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- The traditional program had little impact on female and male students assigned ISS.

Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4 days of ISS. Two (13%) female traditional participants received 1-2 days of ISS and 13 (81%) received 0 day of ISS. Of the 16

male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 3-4 days of ISS, five (31%) received 1-2 days of ISS, and 10 (62%) received 0 day of ISS.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- A negative relationship occurred indicating that transition program students were more likely to be assigned detention.

Of the 36 transition program participants 10 (28%) received 1-2 days of detention and 26 (72%) received 0 day of detention. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants two (6%) received 1-2 days of detention and 30 (94%) received 0 day of detention. This difference was significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Sansone and Baker (1990) report that student's perceived high school expectations as confusing.

- The transition program had little impact on female students' assigned detention when compared with female students in the traditional program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants 6 (30%) received 1-2 days of detention and 14 (70%) received 0 day of detention. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 1-2 days of detention and 15 (94%) received 0 day of detention.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- The transition program had little impact on male students' assigned detention when compared with male students in the traditional program.

Of the 16 male transition program participants 4 (30%) received 1-2 days of detention and 12 (70%) received 0 day of detention. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 1-2 days of detention and 15 (94%) received 0 day of detention.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- The transition program had little impact on female students' assigned detention when compared with male students in the transition program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants 6 (30%) received 1-2 days of detention and 14 (70%) received 0 day of detention. Of the 16 male transition program participants four (25%) received 1-2 days of detention and 12 (75%) received 0 day of detention.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- The traditional program had little impact on female and male students' assigned detention.

Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 1-2 days of detention and 15 (94%) received 0 day of detention. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) received 1-2 days of detention and 15 (94%) received 0 day of detention.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- A negative relationship occurred indicating that transition program students were more likely to be absent.

Of the 36 transition program participants four (11%) were absent 26 or more days, two (6%) were absent 21-25 days, two (6%) were absent 16-20 days, four (11%) were absent 11-15 days, nine (25%) were absent 6-10 days, 11(31%) were absent 1-5 days, and three (8%) were absent 0 day. Of the 32 traditional program of study participants one (3%) were absent 26 or more days, two (6%) were absent 16-20 days, five (16%) were absent 11-15 days, three (9%) were absent 6-10 days, 14 (44%) were absent 1-5 days, and seven (22%) were absent 0 day. The difference was significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected.

In their study, Isakson and Jarvis (1999) suggest that attendance rates improved during the initial transition into high school then dropped to a significantly lower level when compared to attendance at the beginning of the ninth grade.

- The transition program was effective in reducing the number of female students absent when compared with females in the traditional program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants three (15%) were absent 26 or more days, two (10%) were absent 21-25 days, one (5%) were absent 16-20 days, one (5%) were absent 11-15 days, six (30%) were absent 6-10 days, seven (35%) were absent 1-5 days, and none were absent 0 day. Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) were absent 16-20 days, one (6%) were absent 11-15 days, one (6%) were absent 6-10 days, eight (50%) were absent 1-5 days, and five (31%) were absent 0 day.

Smith (1997) suggests that a full transition program has a significant effect of reducing the likelihood of dropping out by 20%.

- The transition program had little impact on male students' attendance when compared with males in the traditional program.

Of the 16 male transition program participants one (6%) were absent 21-25 days, one (6%) were absent 16-20 days, five (31%) were absent 11-15 days, two (13%) were absent 6-10 days, four (25%) were absent 1-5 days, and three (19%) were absent 0 day. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) were absent 26 or more days, two (13%) were absent 16-20 days, three (19%) were absent 11-15 days, two (13%) were absent 6-10 days, six (37%) were absent 1-5 days, and two (13%) were absent 0 day.

Sansone and Baker (1990) suggests that students stop attending class if they struggle academically.

- The transition program had little impact on female students' attendance when compared with males in the transition program.

Of the 20 female transition program participants three (15%) were absent 26 or more days, two (10%) were absent 21-25 days, one (5%) were absent 16-20 days, one (5%) were absent 11-15 days, six (30%) were absent 6-10 days, seven (35%) were absent 1-5 days, and none were absent 0 day. Of the 16 male transition program participants one (6%) were absent 21-25 days, one (6%) were absent 16-20 days, five (31%)

were absent 11-15 days, two (13%) were absent 6-10 days, four (25%) were absent 1-5 days, and three (19%) were absent 0 day.

There is no additional research to support or refute this finding.

- The traditional program had little impact on female and male students' attendance.

Of the 16 female traditional program of study participants one (6%) were absent 16-20 days, one (6%) were absent 11-15 days, one (6%) were absent 6-10 days, eight (50%) were absent 1-5 days, and five (31%) were absent 0 day. Of the 16 male traditional program of study participants one (6%) were absent 26 or more days, two (13%) were absent 16-20 days, three (19%) were absent 11-15 days, two (13%) were absent 6-10 days, six (37%) were absent 1-5 days, and two (13%) were absent 0 day.

In their study, Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) reported that in a school with no transition program the greatest positive influence as indicated by ninth grade participants was “going to class everyday”.

### *Recommendations*

- Decrease the number of required courses to fewer courses to ensure ninth grade students are academically successful (Ascher, 1987).

Transition program students had fewer courses than traditional program of study students. Transition program participants took three double blocked 90 minute classes daily and one elective class for 50 minutes daily. Transition program students were less likely to be

recycled. Virginia Department of Education concludes that students are put back in ninth grade or “recycled” making the ninth grade the largest grade level in the high school (Warner, 2005).

- Increase staff training on gender sensitivities and academic success during transition.

Females in the traditional program were recycled less than males in the traditional program. Males in the transition program were recycled less than males in the traditional program. Fulk (2003) suggests significant gender differences with females scoring higher on organization ( $z=-2.082, p=.37$ ), test anxiety ( $z=-3.393, p=.001$ ), study habits ( $z=-3.384, p=.001$ ), and cognitive strategy ( $z=-2.050, p=.040$ ). Males scored higher on self-regulation ( $z=-2.082, p=.037$ ). Akos and Galassi (2004) suggest that males ( $M=15.7, SD=2.2$ ) are more connected in high school than girls ( $M=14.4, SD=2.8$ ).

- Increase study of grading practices and expectations of ninth grade teachers and students.

Although there was no significant difference in GPA mean of the transition program and the mean of the traditional program having smaller units within the school with consistent practices will reduce ninth grade failure (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2001).

- Increase study of discipline practices and classroom management.

Although there was no significant difference in OSS referrals increased vertical articulation between the middle school and high will support consistent practices and management (Ascher, 1987).

- Increase classroom management training for teachers.

Although there was no significant difference in ISS referrals additional training for teachers will provide support for ninth grade sensitivities (Ascher, 1987). In their study, Sansone and Baker (1990) recommend that ninth grade teachers be provided additional support and resources.

- Increase study of discipline procedures and policies for students and teachers.

There was a negative relationship indicating transition program students were more likely assigned detention. In their study, Sansone and Baker (1990) students' indicated that they had little understanding of how high school policies and procedures differed from middle school.

- Strengthen attendance policies to motivate all students to attend school frequently.

There was a significant difference in absenteeism; the mean of the transition program was lower than the mean of the traditional program. In 2004 Virginia's rate of grade retention is reported the highest in grade 9 at 13 percent (Commonwealth Education Policy Institute, 2004). In June 2005 Governor Warner reported of every 100 high school freshman in

Virginia 74 percent graduate on time (Warner, 2005). Poor attendance leads to retention and/or drop-outs.

### *Limitations*

The students in this study did not come from the same middle school. The different schools may have had different expectations that could have an impact on students' current academic status and conduct. Students represented one urban high school in Southeastern Virginia with a semester based credit system. Additionally, the time frame of this study was one semester and long term impacts can not be predicted. Another limitation was that the same teachers did not teach all of the students in the transition program and the traditional program of study thus teacher expectations and grading practices was a limitation. Students in this study self reported why they did or did not attend summer transition. All students did not self report due to loss of participants and high absenteeism. There was a loss of 11 participants due to transfers to other schools.

### *Recommendations for Further Study*

- Additional longitudinal study of transition and traditional program participants' academic success and GPA.

It would be interesting to determine lasting effects of the transition program on students' academic success and GPA.

- Qualitative study of student perceptions of what is needed to be successful in ninth grade.

It would be interesting to determine ninth grade students' perceptions of the transition to high school several times during the school year.

- Qualitative study of ninth grade teacher perceptions.

It would be interesting to determine what teacher perceptions are of what ninth grade students need in order to be successful.

- Study of what is being done in the eighth grade to prepare students for the ninth grade.

It would be interesting to determine if students are more successful if they received preparation in the eighth grade. Smith (1997) suggests that academic intervention is needed prior to ninth grade. Students who have exhibited weak academics in the past will more than likely not be academically successful during ninth grade (Ascher, 1987). Lindsay (1998) suggests the transition process begin 10 months prior to ninth grade. Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman, and Smith (2000) suggest that low-performing students who transition to ninth grade experience an even greater decline in academic performance.

- Study of current ninth grade transition participants during the tenth grade year.

It would be interesting to determine if current transition program students are successful the following year without additional guidance and double blocked classes with the same teachers.

- Study of discipline procedures at the middle school and high school level.

It would be interesting to determine if middle schools enforce the same discipline procedures and expectations of the high school prior ninth grade.

- Determine professional development provided to ninth grade teachers.

It would be interesting to determine how ninth grade teachers are sensitized to the concerns surrounding the ninth grade (Ascher, 1987).

- Determine the implications of peer coaching for students and teachers during transition.

It would be interesting to determine if the additional coaching has an impact on teachers and students during the transition.

- Study of potential impact of extra curricular activities or work on student transition.

It would be interesting to determine how additional activities impact academic success of students.

### *Conclusions*

Educators and researchers are concerned with the challenges surrounding the transition to high school. Some of the concerns include high failure rates, lack of Algebra I readiness, and poor attendance. These concerns contribute to drop-out rates and the level of competitiveness students will have when facing the workforce. This is a timely issue as we continue to address Standards of Learning (SOL) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the initiatives to rethink our high schools as they attempt to prepare students for the ongoing changes of the economy, workforce, and expectations of colleges and universities. The purpose of this study was to determine if a transition program has a greater success rate, as measured by GPA, number of students recycled, attendance, and conduct, than a traditional program of study for over age, first time ninth grade students by the end of first semester of the ninth grade.

Three of the six research hypotheses, the null hypothesis were accepted. There was no statistically significant difference in the mean of transition and traditional participants GPA, referrals for out-of school suspension, and referrals for in-school suspension. There was a statistically significant difference in the mean of the transition and traditional participants' number recycled, detention, and absences; the null hypotheses were rejected.

In the case of research question one a statistically significant difference occurred concerning males in the transition and traditional program being recycled. Additionally a statistically significant difference occurred concerning female and males in the traditional program being recycled. In the case of research question six a statistically significant difference occurred concerning absences of females in the transition and traditional program.

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## Appendix A



**Office of Research Compliance**  
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FWAD0000572( expires 7/20/07)  
IRB # is IRB00000667.

DATE: July 21, 2006

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Travis W. Twiford  
Felicia Dyke

FROM: Carmen Green 

SUBJECT: **IRB Exempt Approval:** "How Does a Transition Program Impact First Time Over Age Ninth Grade Students", IRB # 06-410

I have reviewed your request to the IRB for exemption for the above referenced project. I concur that the research falls within the exempt status. Approval is granted effective as of July 21, 2006.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

cc: File

Permission from School Division

[REDACTED]

June 26, 2006  
Ms. Felicia Dyke  
10 Castle Haven Road  
Hampton, Virginia 23666

Dear Ms. Dyke:

The Research and Authorization Committee has met and reviewed your application to conduct the study entitled *How do Transition Programs Impact Over Age first time 9th Grade Students*. I am pleased to inform you that the committee has approved your request with the following stipulations:

- No reference to [REDACTED] Schools should be made in your report without written permission from the chair person of the research Authorization Committee.
- Upon completion of your study, you may be asked to present your findings to a group of [REDACTED] Schools educators.
- Please send a final copy of your project to the Research Authorization Committee.

I wish you much success on your dissertation. Your topic is of great interest to [REDACTED] Schools. [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
Research Authorization Committee Chair  
[REDACTED]

## Appendix B

### Transition Program Student Schedule-Sample

Subject	Period	
	Day A	Day B
English 9	1	2
Algebra I	3	4
*Health/PE or any Elective	5	5
Biology	6	7

\*5<sup>th</sup> period meets daily

Traditional Program of Study Student Schedule-Sample

Subject	Period	
	Day A	Day B
English 9		1
Algebra I	2	
Biology		3
World Geography	4	
*Health/PE	5	5
Elective	6	
Elective		7

\*5<sup>th</sup> period meets daily