THE COMPARISON OF THREE EIGHTH GRADE TO NINTH GRADE 
TRANSITION PROGRAMS IN A SOUTH FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL 

by 
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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the 
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Florida Atlantic University 
Boca Raton, Florida
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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr. Ted Urich, Department of Educational Leadership, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the College of Education and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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ABSTRACT

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This study compared three groups of ninth grade students in a selected high school in South Florida. The three groups were ninth grade students who attended Blanche Ely High School in Broward County, Florida during the 1999-2001 school years. The first program is the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy or LCA. This program was housed on the north campus of Broward Community College. The second program is the Environmental Science Technology Program or ESTP. This program parallels the LCA program, but was housed on the main campus of Blanche Ely High School. The third group was randomly selected from ninth grade students who attended Blanche Ely High School’s main campus. This random sample served as the control group.
Factors that were associated with academic success such as low socio-economic status, an urban community, and ethnicity were represented equally in all groups. Special education students and those students who were classified as limited language proficiency were eliminated from this study.

The purpose of this study was to determine which school environment had the most positive impact on eighth graders transitioning into the ninth grade as determined by GPA, attendance, and school climate. The significance of this research was generated by the fact that 38.2 percent of Broward County ninth graders failed to achieve a 2.0 GPA during the 1997-98 school year.

The primary means of data collection for this study was through (a) transcript evaluation using grade point averages, (b) attendance records and (c) school climate survey attitudes. The data collected covered August, 1999 through February, 2001.

The School Board of Broward County, Florida may determine through this study which environment was most beneficial to increasing student achievement, attendance, and school climate at the ninth grade level. There are currently 23 high schools in Broward County. Each high school enrolls approximately 800 to 1000 rising ninth graders each year and the number is growing (Broward Schools, 1999). The goal of the School Board of Broward County, Florida is to increase student achievement at all levels. By creating alternatives to the large traditional high school environment, students at the ninth grade level might be more successful in their academic pursuits thus raising the standards of excellence in the county.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. x

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................. 1
   The Transition Process ................................................................................................. 3
   Transitional Programs .............................................................................................. 7
   Pedagogical Partnerships ......................................................................................... 8
   School Climate ......................................................................................................... 11
   Broward County, Florida .......................................................................................... 14
   Ninth Grade Programs at Blanche Ely High School .................................................. 15
      The 4+1 Block Schedule ...................................................................................... 15
      The Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy ................................................. 16
   The LCA Four-Year Plan ......................................................................................... 18
   Statement of the Problem ....................................................................................... 20
   Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................... 21
   The Research Hypothesis ...................................................................................... 22
   Research Questions ................................................................................................ 23
   The Null Hypothesis .............................................................................................. 23
   Methodology ........................................................................................................... 24
   Population and Sample .......................................................................................... 26
   Significance of the Study ....................................................................................... 26
   Limitations of the Study ...................................................................................... 27
   Definition of Terms ................................................................................................ 28
   Organization of the Study ...................................................................................... 30

2 RELATED LITERATURE ................................................................................................. 32
   Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................... 33
   Review of Literature ............................................................................................... 33
      The Leadership Process and Change .................................................................. 33
   School Climate ....................................................................................................... 42
   Year-Round Education .......................................................................................... 47
   Year-Round Calendar Configurations ..................................................................... 49
   Year-Round Education and Student Achievement ................................................ 50
   Ninth Grade Transition Programs in the United States .......................................... 53
   Florida’s LCA vs. Pennsylvania’s Gear-Up .............................................................. 56

 x
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Comparison of LCA vs. Random Sample vs. ESTP Grade Point Averages 9th Grade August 1999 — June 2000</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Comparison of LCA vs. Random Sample vs. ESTP Grade Point Averages 10th Grade August 2000 — January 2001</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>T-test Results for 9th Grade Comparison Groups</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>T-test Results for 10th Grade Comparison Groups</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Comparison of LCA Attendance vs. Random Sample Attendance 9th Grade, August 1999 — June 2000</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Comparison of LCA Attendance vs. ESTP Attendance 9th Grade, August 1999 — June 2000</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7     | Comparison of Mean Attendance Data LCA vs. Random Sample vs. ESTP 9th Grade, August 1999 — June 2000  
  T-test Results for 9th Grade Comparison Groups                                             | 93   |
| 8     | Comparison of LCA Attendance vs. Random Sample Attendance 10th Grade, August 2000 — January 2001 | 95   |
| 9     | Comparison of LCA Attendance vs. ESTP Attendance 10th Grade, August 2000 — January 2001       | 97   |
| 10    | Comparison of Mean Attendance Data LCA vs. Random Sample vs. ESTP 10th Grade, August 1999 — January 2001 
  T-test Results for 10th Grade Comparison Groups                                              | 99   |
| 11    | Paired T-test Values for LCA Students                                                          | 100  |
| 12    | School Climate Survey Responses Group Rankings With Mean Standard Score                        | 103  |
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

James Comer of Yale University first founded the School Development Program in 1968. Comer theorized that many children, especially those in inner city schools, came to school without the personal, social, and moral development necessary to achieve academic success (Comer, 1985). Over a period of years, Comer developed a nine-part process to foster a stronger, healthier relationship between the school and the home. The Comprehensive School Plan gave direction to the school improvement process including transitioning students academically from one grade level to another, maintaining and improving school climate, promoting staff development, and increasing public relations. A student and staff support team helped to improve the social climate of the school while a parent team promoted parent involvement in all areas of school life (Comer, 1985).

The School Development Program researchers conducted numerous studies of student achievement in Comer schools over the past 15 years. The nine-part process, including the transitioning of students academically between grade levels, and the continued improvement in school climate, increased test scores on standardized tests. In Prince George's County, Maryland, for example, average percentile gains in math, reading, and language arts on the California Achievement Test (CAT) were significantly higher in
Comer schools than in non-Comer schools. There were also documented improvements in behavior, attendance, self-concept, and school climate in Comer schools (Haynes, 1986-1996).

Other theorists developed programs that focused on building positive and productive school environments. Theodore R. Sizer (1992) has presented a series of compelling arguments that high schools should refocus and concentrate on helping students acquire the basic knowledge and tools for success in life. Sizer conjectured that schools should focus on teaching students mental skills, such as independent and creative thinking. The curiosity of the student should drive the curriculum with single-subject teaching being replaced by interdisciplinary study. Despite the best efforts from well-prepared teachers within the present traditional classroom-oriented models, many ninth through twelfth grade students are not responding academically to the challenges of the traditional high school experience. In 1984, Sizer founded the Coalition of Essential Schools. The Coalition was founded to assist the American high school in developing an educational system that would lead to better teaching and more genuine learning. The Coalition of Essential Schools is a national network of schools engaged in restructuring the educational process to promote better student learning through nine guiding principles. These principles include that teaching and learning should be personalized and that the school’s climate should be one of trust, decency, and high expectations without stress and fear (Sizer, 1984).
Sizer sustained that schools must be redesigned to meet the educational demands of our society. He maintained that educators must develop a better model to allow students to perform to their fullest potential. High schools can be impersonal places when classes are overcrowded and teachers are unable to spend time getting to know the individual needs of every student assigned to their classes. Personalization implies options for students, different ways and settings for differing individuals. Finding the right way to encourage the growth of each student’s self-esteem requires knowing each student. It follows that the more the high schools personalize their work with students, the more effective they will be. We all work best for people we respect; we study well in school for teachers we admire; we admire and respect those teachers who know us as individuals who are worthwhile people (Sizer, 1984).

Downsizing a large school population into smaller groups of students is another reform effort that is being tried across the country. Specifically, ninth grade centers are being developed in an attempt to bring stability to the transition process. Studies suggest that if the larger high school is reduced in size by the creation of houses, students will receive more individual attention, peer relationships will grow stronger, and they will have a sense of belonging to a specialized group (Sizer, 1992).

Starting with the ninth grade, educators must focus on the needs of these adolescents to assist them in the transition from the smaller, more personalized environment of the middle school to the larger, indifferent atmosphere that the high school generates when several middle school populations merge into one (Weldy, 1990).
The Transition Process

The school environment significantly influences adolescent development. The transition from eighth grade into ninth grade brings many changes for the adolescent including societal changes associated with the convergence of several different middle schools into one high school, choices in their personal academic curriculum, and greater responsibilities placed on them as young adults. A study conducted by Jay Hertzog and Lena Morgan at the State University of West Georgia reported that the Allegheny County School District in Pennsylvania could not promote nearly one quarter of its ninth grade students to the tenth grade at the end of the 1997-98 school year (Chute, 1999).

Chute discussed that one major reason for this high failure rate was poor attendance. The lowest attendance in any grade was reported in the ninth grade. Another contributing factor to the high failure rate was the number of failing grades received by ninth graders. There is a direct correlation between student's attendance in class, their level of test scores, and their academic success. Poor attendance breeds poor academic success resulting in failing grades. The third highest contributing factor was the number of suspensions given to ninth grade students. In this particular study 33.8 percent of all ninth grade students were suspended from one particular school compared to the district high of 37 percent in the total eighth grade (Chute, 1999).

Hertzog and Morgan stated that large class size, along with the lack of transitional support from the eighth grade into the ninth grade, contributes to disciplinary problems. Hertzog and Morgan indicated in this study that educators are thrusting responsibility on
students before they are ready for it. The traditional high school is not developmentally appropriate for every student. Eighth grade teachers and administrators warn students that they will not be able to behave the same way in high school as they do in middle school. With these words of warning, some freshmen arrive at high school with feelings of fear and intimidation (Chute, 1999). This study concludes that it is critical to build bridges between the eighth grade and the ninth grade. Students, teachers, parents, and administrators must get involved in planning smooth transitional activities that encourage participation and promote feelings of security and belonging (Chute, 1999).

Studies continue to suggest that the ninth grade transition is particularly challenging because students are facing an environment that might breed alienation or anonymity. They are at an uncomfortable stage of adolescence and face a range of developmental issues including physical maturation, cognitive advancements, emotional development, the need to become more self-reliant and autonomous from their parents, expanding relationships with peers, and gaining the ability to have intimate friendships (Newman & Newman, 1999).

Additional studies show that the transition into a new academic environment has had various negative consequences for some adolescents. Research has associated the following negative outcomes when the transition process is disregarded from middle school to high school: (a) Lower grade point averages (Barone, Aguirre-Deandreis, & Trickett, 1991; Blyth, Simmons, & Carlton-Ford, 1983; Felner, Primavera, & Cauce, 1981); (b) poorer individual student attendance (Barone, Aguirre-Deandreis, & Trickett,
discipline problems associated with the transition to a high school building (Moyer, & Motta, 1982; Weldy, 1990). J. Schmidt determined that these negative behaviors were associated with the need for social acceptance in the new school environment. Social acceptance can be defined as a sense of belonging to a group. This feeling of belonging strengthens the self-confidence of students and enhances their self-esteem, thus promoting successful experiences. Adolescents who successfully gained social acceptance in high school were found to have experienced a smoother transition from eighth grade into ninth grade (Schmidt, 1993). When students feel that they belong and bond with the elements in their environment, they tend to be motivated in their academic pursuits, put more effort into their studies, participate more in extra-curricular activities, and eventually successfully graduate from high school (Felner, Primavera, & Cauce, 1982; Goodenow, 1993).

For students experiencing the perturbations associated with the school transition process, social support may influence their adjustment (Barone, Aguirre-Deandreas, & Trickett, 1991). Peers often play a particularly significant role in attitudes of adolescents, including their orientation toward school (Berndt, 1982; Felner, Primavera, & Cauce, 1982; Kelly, & Hansen, 1987). As adolescents face daily pressures and stress, they turn to each other for support. Peers serve as models for each other in determining how to meet challenges in both social and academic situations associated with transition. An example shows that when high school juniors were paired with groups of four to five
eighth grade students in a program at West Morris Central High School in Chester, New Jersey, the result was that the eighth grade students felt more comfortable about their first day in the high school building. It was determined that separating students into small groups made personalization possible. This program, called REACH 2000, provides transition support to the rising ninth grade students. A full year of transitional activities promotes strong relationships and feelings of belonging (Umphrey, 1999).

Transitional Programs

In an effort to increase the success of ninth grade students, high schools in the United States have implemented various activities and programs to create a support system for their incoming freshmen.

One example is Franklin Pierce High School in Tacoma, Washington that sponsors a Freshman Getaway. This program provides information, guidance, bonding and fun. The Getaway is the culmination of an orientation program that begins in the spring semester of the eighth grade year. The high school guidance staff counsels the eighth graders individually informing them of their academic choices for the fall of their ninth grade year. Over the summer, these transitioning eighth grade to ninth grade students receive an invitation to a 12-hour Getaway. Part of this time is spent off the high school campus at a local university doing team-building activities and working on projects (Umphrey, 1999). This transition promotes a bond between the ninth graders that increases their feelings of social acceptance.
A second example, Assumption High School in Napoleonville, Louisiana, is known for its Freshman Olympics held during the first week of ninth grade. The weeklong event is hosted by the Student Council and includes the faculty and seniors in the freshman activities. The purpose of the week is to bond the rising ninth graders to their new environment by introducing them to their teachers outside of the classroom setting (Umphrey, 1999).

At Broughton High School in Raleigh, North Carolina, a volunteer committee of upper level students contacts all incoming ninth grade students and invites them to an orientation program prior to the opening of the school year. The rising ninth graders tour the school, receive their class schedules, follow their schedule and meet their teachers, and receive materials about the school and their classes. They also find out about clubs, activities, and sports. Once school begins, freshmen receive a second phone call from the student volunteer committee personally inviting them to the first football game of the season (Umphrey, 1999). The personal invitation promotes feelings of social acceptance by making the ninth grader feel that their presence at the function is important.

Another example of a transitional program is the one at Isidore Newman School in New Orleans, Louisiana. This school provides upper classmen to be New Student Buddies to each incoming ninth grader. After eighth grade, the Buddies write to each other over the summer. The Buddy then invites the rising ninth grade student to a day at a water park the week before school begins. There is also a formal orientation program at the school where freshmen are briefed about schedules and activities, tour the school, and
locate the classrooms on their schedules (Umphrey, 1999). These activities are designed
to help the ninth grade student feel that they are a part of the new high school population.
Through this transition process, relationships are built creating feelings of social
acceptance.

Pedagogical Partnerships

Partnerships are developing between high schools, community colleges, and
universities throughout the nation. The purpose of these partnerships is to focus the high
school student on academic achievement beginning in the ninth grade and progressing
academic excellence toward higher education.

One example is Boston University Academy, founded in 1993, that supported the
theory that students are best served by acquiring a broad and coherent educational
foundation before they begin to explore more specialized interests. The academy is
located on the Boston University campus and boasts a rigorous approach to the
intellectual and cultural challenges of contemporary life. The Academy states in its
introduction on their website that their educational institution is not a traditional college-
preparatory school. Contrarily, its program is designed to make the transition between
high school and college virtually seamless by giving students access to college facilities
and college coursework while maintaining a highly supportive, high school environment.
Students graduate from the Academy with a high school diploma and 48 college credits on
their transcript (Boston University Academy [On-line] 1999).
A second example, The Leon M. Goldstein High School for the Sciences, located on the campus of Kingsborough Community College in Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn, New York is a college preparatory school. This school offers an intensive academic program for grads 9-12, with special emphasis on science and mathematics and includes the use of the college’s resources, enrichment activities, and guidance services. The program is designed to personalize the student’s education through individualized guidance and tutorial programs available without scheduling an appointment. Classes and activities are advertised as being conducted in the safe and inviting atmosphere of the college. This regular, comprehensive, academic high school is a small citywide educational option school with goals established collaboratively by the New York Board of Education and Kingsborough Community College (Kingsborough Community College [On-line] 1999).

Patterson High School in Baltimore, Maryland created a partnership with Johns Hopkins University at the invitation of the Maryland State Department of Education. Patterson was one of two high schools eligible for state takeover when the partnership was developed. The program titled, The Center for Students Placed At Risk, worked with the university to turn the school around. One program that grew out of this effort was The Ninth Grade Success Academy. This separate transitional program places 150-180 first-year high school students with interdisciplinary teams of 4-5 teachers who share a block schedule with common planning time. This program has its own faculty, its own management team, and although it is not housed on the university campus, it is self-
contained in its own part of the high school building with its own entrance clearly labeled (McPartland, 1996).

In summary, high schools across the country have implemented a wide variety of programs and activities in an effort to promote a successful transition for all eighth grade students entering the ninth grade. These attempts at transition have had positive results (Chute, 1999). Academic success seems to be directly correlated to the quality of the transformation process that allows students to make a smooth transition from a smaller eighth grade environment into a larger high school population.

School Climate

Schools are more than institutions of academic learning. They are complex social systems where relationships between peers, teachers, administrators, and staff play a vital role in the overall academic process. A sense of community reigns. At schools that are socially healthy, students feel a sense of belonging. They forge friendships with their peers and maintain respectful relationships with adults. At schools where the social dynamics are unhealthy, students fight and harass one another, show disrespect for teachers, and feel isolated or alienated from the school community. Most schools are a mixture of both (ASCD, 1999).

When parents, educators, and students share values, beliefs, and ideals about schooling, there is a better chance of creating schools that most everyone will support.
Sociologists James S. Coleman and Thomas Hoffer speculated that the difference between a Catholic high school and a public high school lies in the strongly supportive community built up between parents and teachers...based on a shared set of beliefs and values. Such cohesive communities of adults are almost totally absent from most public schools (Coleman, & Hoffer, 1990). Parents of secondary school students are twice as likely as those of primary school students to be among those parents feeling most alienated from their child’s school. The findings contained in the Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher (2000), reveals that the transition between primary and secondary school is a critical time for students, parents and teachers (Markow, 2000).

Family involvement has been linked to advancing academic achievement. Assisting students with their assignments, and showing a sincere interest in their activities while providing emotional support has been attributed to advancing academic achievement (Coleman and Hoffer, 1990).

Peers are an important source of companionship and support. They also play an important role in influencing academic success. Peer interactions are responsible for both positive and negative school experiences both socially and academically. Therefore, if parents are aware of the relationships their child maintains, they can assist in developing and nurturing the positive relationships that may promote a successful school experience (Merz and Furman, 1997).

For teens today, the issue of people getting along together is very important. Students who said that their teachers did a good job of teaching tolerance reported that
students from different backgrounds got along very or somewhat well at their school than
those who said their teachers did a poor job (Markow, 2000). When parents and teachers
were asked about the most important issue facing America today, the Metropolitan
Survey revealed that they thought that improving the quality of education was the
primary concern. For students, however, the issue of improving the quality of education
was second to having people get along with one another (Markow, 2000).

Violence at school has been labeled by professionals as a potential threat to the
academic success of children. Approximately one in four students reports worrying
about becoming a victim of crime or threats at school, while one in eight reports being
victimized (American Psychological Association, 1993). In light of such reports, schools
have implemented violence prevention programs. As these programs continue, teachers,
administrators, parents, and students have noted that a possible connection exists
between school violence and the clothing that students wear to school. The fashion trend
at schools, especially urban schools, is largely associated with gang related attire
(Orpinas, 1995).

Children's desire to be fashionable is also related to clothing and school violence.
Children sometimes envy what others have and feel inferior due to the lack of financial
resources. Subsequently, children have been violently injured or even murdered for their
designer clothing. This reality suggests that school uniforms may reduce these violent
incidences. In addition, requiring students to wear the same clothing might send them a
message that they all belong to the same organization, stressing teamwork and
camaraderie. Students who feel safe, secure, and free from threats of violence may perform better academically. Those who fear for their safety in school or even on the way to school may not learn effectively, and they may turn to truancy as a viable alternative to facing the daily threats of violence (Online, 1996).

In a survey conducted by the United Teachers of Dade County, Florida, it was found that approximately 60 percent of the group's members supported mandatory uniforms at school (Gursky, 1996). Similarly, of the 5,500 principals surveyed while attending the National Association of Secondary School Principals annual conference in February 1996, more than 70 percent believed that requiring students to wear uniforms to school would reduce violent incidences and discipline problems (Portner, 1996).

Broward County, Florida

Many ninth grade students find that they are academically overwhelmed when attempting to transition into the high school setting. A study conducted by Broward County in 1998-99 indicated that 50 percent of the school districts in the state of Florida reported that 1 out of every 4 ninth grade students failed to earn a 2.0 grade point average. In Broward County, 38.2 percent of all ninth graders failed to achieve a 2.0 grade point average (Sun-Sentinel, 1999).
This study also pointed out that in Broward County, each of the 23 high schools has developed its own unique program to assist eighth grade students in the transition to the ninth grade. Most high schools begin the orientation process in the early spring of the eighth grade year with an assembly program in the middle school. A few high schools invite the rising freshmen to tour the high school campus prior to the end of the eighth grade year. Other high schools, such as Deerfield Beach High School in northern Broward County, have a tradition called Freshman Round-Up where school is opened on a weekend prior to the first day of fall classes to pick up their schedule and find their classrooms. Another high school in Broward County, Blanche Ely High School developed a new idea in the transition process. A partnership with the local community college provided an alternative to transitioning eighth graders from the middle school environment to the large high school (Broward County Schools, 1999).

Ninth Grade Programs at Blanche Ely High School

Blanche Ely High School, located in Pompano Beach, Florida is a four-year comprehensive high school that emphasizes academic programs through two magnet programs. One is called the Science-Pre-engineering Program, and the second is the Medical Science Program. Students enrolled in these two magnet programs meet criteria set forth by Broward County. To be considered for the Science/Pre-engineering students
must score in the 80th percentile or above on a standardized test, such as the Stanford Achievement Test, and have maintained an A or B+ average beginning in the eighth grade. Medical Science students must score in the 50th percentile or above on the same type of standardized test and must have maintained a "B" average or higher beginning in the eighth grade.

The Environmental Science Technology Program (ESTP) is not considered a magnet program. However, the program was designed to meet the needs of average (C) students who score at approximately the 45th percentile on the Stanford Achievement Test. These students are selected and become part of the ESTP program in the ninth grade. Teachers are teamed with the students to help promote the feeling of belonging to a specialized group. ESTP students continue their participation in the program throughout high school until graduation. This program is housed on the main campus.

The 4+1 Block Schedule

To increase academic performance, Blanche Ely High School, in 1996, restructured its weekly class schedule by extending the school day one hour and ten minutes each day, Monday through Thursday, leaving Friday available as an alternative to summer school. All students complete their classes required for graduation on the Monday through Thursday extended day schedule. Students who fail a class on the Monday through Thursday schedule must make up that class on Friday.

This innovative 4+1 schedule, implemented during the 1996-97 school year, gave students the opportunity to make-up failed credits, attend test preparation classes, or
advance themselves by taking additional elective classes such as a foreign language, art, drama, or earn community service hours through volunteer programs scheduled on Friday.

Ninth grade students were targeted for test preparation classes on Friday to assist them in forming a strong foundation in the basic skills necessary to be successful high school students who will seek post-secondary studies.

The Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy

To further strengthen the academic success of ninth grade students, Blanche Ely High School developed a partnership with a local community college. The Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy (LCA), a partnership between Blanche Ely High School and Broward Community College North Campus, transitions eighth grade students into ninth grade. A team of educators from Blanche Ely High School assists the students through the difficult transition process by building academic, social, emotional, and leadership skills. This program was developed using a combination of the principles designed by James Comer and Ted Sizer. A team of 4 teachers shares a group of 70-100 students on a modified block schedule. The teachers' schedules are arranged to accommodate a common planning time. Parents are fused into the curriculum through academic projects, field trips, and guest speakers. Individual conferences are held regularly both in person and by telephone. Written communication is presented weekly in the form of progress reports, fliers, newsletters, and assignments. Students are required to wear modified uniforms consisting of specific shirts provided by the Academy.
two days per week, a JROTC uniform provided by the high school program once a week, and dress-up attire one day a week. On the fifth day of school, students may choose their own attire as long as it adheres to the School Board of Broward County, Florida dress code.

An important aspect of the program was to develop a feeling of belonging to a special group, a group that valued their educational experience, a group that focused on a successful future. The teachers and administration continually worked to make the classroom environment a personalized place where trust and respect allowed students to feel secure enough to make mistakes, correct them, and move forward in their endeavors.

The Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy is housed in three classrooms on the North Campus of Broward Community College in South Florida. The classrooms are on the perimeter of the campus next to the public library. This location minimizes the ninth grade students' interaction with the college students. Bathroom facilities are nearby, but are not exclusive to the program. Lunch is provided by another Broward County high school located across the street from the community college campus, rather than by Blanche Ely High School that is located approximately four miles from the community college campus. This partnership between the two high schools permitted a successful lunch program. The high school cafeteria staff transports the lunches over to the LCA students in a truck supplied by the School Board of Broward County, Florida. Students are not permitted to buy lunch from the cafeteria on the college campus. This further protects the ninth grade students from interacting with the college students on a
regular basis. Students can chose to eat lunch on picnic tables in back of the library, in the classroom, or on benches in front of the classroom building. Students build strong friendships by sharing lunch together on a daily basis. When the students returned to the traditional high school campus for their tenth grade year, most of the LCA students continued to sit together in the high school cafeteria.

The program, implemented during the 1999-2000 school year, shares the same weekly 4+1 schedule as the students who are housed on the main campus. The LCA program parallels the ESTP program in the selection process, eligibility requirements, and in promoting a sense of unity to a specialized group. Students are eligible for entrance into the LCA program if they score in the 45th percentile or above on a standardized test, such as the Stanford Achievement Test, and have maintained a C average or higher in the eighth grade. The program is limited to 100 students. Limitation is necessary due to space restrictions. Broward Community College North Campus currently provides three classrooms that can accommodate up to 100 students.

The LCA Four-year Plan

The mission of the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy is to provide for the total needs of ninth graders in all areas of development: academic, social, emotional, and physical. Through active involvement that addresses these needs, ninth graders learn how to learn, thus establishing the foundation for success in their quest to achieve career and other life goals.
The Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy was specifically created to support a smooth transition from middle school to high school. Since 38.2 percent of Broward County ninth graders failed to achieve a 2.0 GPA during the 1997-98 school year, this pilot program was developed to promote emphasis on rigorous academic coursework, citizenship and leadership skills, developing self-esteem, and promoting confidence (Broward County Schools, 1998).

The four-year plan for LCA students is multi-dimensional. Ninth grade classes are held at the college campus, away from upper level peers. This permits ninth grade students to better focus on academic subjects that will prepare them to meet the challenges of a demanding high school curriculum. LCA students will return to the main campus of Blanche Ely for their tenth grade year to gain exposure to a complete high school experience. Eleventh grade LCA students who maintained a 3.0 grade point average are scheduled for classes half of the day at the high school and half of the day on the community college campus. The classes taken on the college campus will count toward the student’s high school diploma as well as toward their freshman year of college. These college courses are known as dual enrollment classes. Successful twelfth grade LCA students return full time to the Broward Community College (BCC) campus where they are enrolled in college classes. These students become full time students at BCC and are classified as Early Admissions students. The School Board of Broward County, Florida pays the tuition and book fees for all dual enrollment and early admission classes. Therefore, these students have the opportunity to complete their freshman year of college
free of charge prior to receiving their high school diploma. This unique partnership between the high school and the community college may enhance the development of academically prepared students while reducing the number of remedial courses that are currently offered at the college (Broward Schools, 1999). The key to success lies in early intervention, the transition into ninth grade.

Academic success in a college-bound, high school curriculum is a critical part of long-term academic achievement. Students must achieve at least a 2.0 or C average to graduate from a Florida public high school. The ability to participate in dual enrollment classes at the community college while still enrolled in high school requires no less than a 3.0 or B average. Entrance into the dual enrollment program was a major consideration when forming the partnership with the college. LCA students will be eligible for entrance into the community college dual enrollment program if they meet criteria upon completion of their tenth grade year. Therefore, academic success in the ninth grade is a vital component of the program.

Statement of the Problem

The problem investigated in this study was to compare three 8th grade to 9th grade transition programs in a selected high school in South Florida, Blanche Ely High School. This study investigated whether the educational environment had an impact on student achievement, daily student attendance, and school climate. The three programs investigated for this study were the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy, the
Environmental Science Technology Program, and the traditional eighth grade to ninth grade program. This study will also investigate the impact of returning the ninth grade students from the community college campus to the traditional high school in the tenth grade and its effect on student achievement and attendance.

Specifically, this study determined which educational environment had the greatest impact on student achievement as measured by their grade point average (GPA), student daily attendance, and school climate as determined by the administration of the National Association of Secondary School Principals School Climate Survey (NASSP). These three transitional programs were compared during the 1999-2001 school years.

The NASSP School Climate Survey was administered to 222 students involved in this study to determine their opinions on school climate. The 222 students surveyed represented seventy-four students from the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy housed on the community college campus; seventy-four students from the Environmental Science Technology Program housed on the traditional high school campus; and seventy-four students from the traditional high school program housed on the high school campus.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine which school environment had the most positive impact on eighth graders transitioning into the ninth grade as determined by GPA, attendance, and school climate. Once this is determined, school officials can decide which environment is most beneficial to increasing student achievement, attendance, and school climate at the ninth grade level.
Grades for each student in each of the three groups, the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy, the Environmental Technology Program, and the random sample were collected at each nine-week marking period, as was each student’s attendance record. The grades were then averaged for each group separately, thereby determining which group performed best academically at each nine-week marking period. The same process was done for attendance. The average of each marking period’s attendance record determined which group had the highest number of absences.

The School Climate Survey, provided by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, was given to students over a three-day period of time. The survey took each student approximately 30 minutes to complete. The surveys were coded (01 for LCA, 02 for ESTP, and 03 for the Random Sample) in order to correlate the three pieces of data, GPA, attendance, and school climate for each group.

The Research Hypothesis

There is a significant difference in academic performance determined by grade point averages between the ninth grade LCA group, the ESTP population, and the transitional eighth grade to ninth grade program.

There is a significant difference in student daily attendance as determined by attendance records between the LCA ninth grade group, the Environmental Science Technology Program, and the traditional eighth grade to ninth grade program.
There is a significant difference in student achievement as determined by grade point averages at the tenth grade level when the LCA students are returned to the traditional high school from the community college campus.

There is a significant difference in the attitude of the 222 students surveyed as measured by the NASSP School Climate Survey.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

Question 1: How does the educational environment impact student achievement?

Question 2: How does the educational environment impact student attendance?

Question 3: Is academic performance maintained in grade ten when the LCA students return to the traditional high school setting?

Question 4: Is there a relationship between school climate, attendance, and GPA as determined by student responses on the NASSP School Climate Survey?

The Null Hypotheses

This study will attempt to prove the following null hypotheses: There will be no significant individual differences in academic performance between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those ninth grade students educated in a special setting as determined by their weighted grade point averages.
There will be no significant individual differences in daily class attendance between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those ninth grade students educated in a special setting as determined by their attendance records.

There will be no significant individual differences in academic performance in the tenth grade between the students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those students educated in a special setting as determined by their weighted grade point average.

There will be no significant differences in academic performance between the students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those students educated in a special setting as a result of individual attitudes as determined by answers provided on the school climate survey.

Methodology

A multiple regression analysis using SPSS was used to test the correlation and significance between the predictors (LCA students and non-LCA students) and the predicted variables (academic success and daily attendance). The analysis used a pair wise deletion of missing data to account for missing GPA scores and missing attendance records. An alpha level of $p<.05$ was selected to determine significance.

Student attendance was measured by the number of student days absent on a 180-day school calendar. For the attendance data, comparisons of the means of the 1999-2000
days absent of the LCA students, and a comparison of the means of the 1999-2000 days absent of the ESTP and the traditional eighth grade to ninth grade program were conducted by using a t-test. If the probability of the observed statistical value was p<.05, the hypothesis of no difference would be rejected.

Using survey research, a questionnaire was used with six scales (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neither Agree nor Disagree; Agree; Strongly Agree; Don’t Know). The questionnaire used for this study was taken from the school climate survey published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals titled School Climate Survey. Fifty-five questions relating to teachers-student relationships, administration, security and maintenance, student academic orientation, student behavioral values, guidance, student-peer relationships, parent and community school relationships, instructional management, and student activities were asked of 222 students. The 222 students were represented as follows: seventy-four students from the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy housed on the community college campus; seventy-four students from the Environmental Science Technology Program housed on the traditional high school campus; and seventy-four students from the traditional eighth grade to ninth grade program housed on the high school campus. The survey was used to determine whether there is a relationship between school climate, attendance, and GPA. The survey was administered over a three-day period by a lead teacher who was trained by the researcher in administrative procedures.
SPSS was used to perform the statistical analyses. Analyses for
descriptive/cross-sectional design was used. Descriptive statistics tabulated frequency
providing a group mean score. Inferential statistics were substantiated using a one-way
analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Bonferroni multiple comparison techniques
for each of the dependent variable means across the three groups of students of the
independent variable. Analyses for the correlational design was determined through
Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the independent variable
(alternate school environment) and the dependent variables (attitudes).

Population and Sample

This study compared three groups of ninth grade students in a selected high
school in South Florida. The three groups were ninth grade students who attended
Blanche Ely High School in Broward County during the 1999-2001 school years. Two of
the groups were composed of selected students who were voluntarily placed into one of
two parallel programs. The first program is the Ninth Grade Learning Community
Academy or LCA. This program is housed on the north campus of Broward Community
College. The second program is the Environmental Science Technology Program or ESTP.
This program parallels the LCA program, but is housed on the main campus of Blanche
Ely High School. The third group was randomly selected from ninth grade students who
attended Blanche Ely High School's main campus. This random sample served as the
control group. Factors that were associated with academic success such as low socio-economic status, an urban community, and ethnicity were represented equally in all groups. Special education students and those students who were classified as limited language proficiency were eliminated from this study. The research is based on the independent factor that during the 1999-2000 school year, one group of ninth grade students was housed on a community college campus, while the second group and the random sample were housed on the traditional high school campus two miles from the college campus.

Significance of the Study

There are currently 23 comprehensive high schools in Broward County. Each high school enrolls approximately 800 to 1000 rising ninth graders each year (Broward Schools, 1999). The number is growing. More high schools are being built. The goal of the School Board of Broward County, Florida is to increase student achievement at all levels. This research may assist the school board in its endeavor to meet the high academic achievement standards set by the governor for A+ Schools. By creating alternatives to the large traditional high school environment, students at the ninth grade level might be more successful in their academic pursuits thus raising the standards of excellence in the county. If ninth grade students are more successful, there might be fewer dropouts. Currently the attrition rate from the ninth grade to the twelfth grade is approximately 55% (Broward Schools, 1999). Students who feel good about their
accomplishments might complete high school in four years and go on to successful careers or further their educational experiences.

The results of this research could also assist the community college with their effort to reduce the number of remedial courses currently being offered. This study could advance the development of future alternative high school programs resulting in more college-ready students.

Limitations of the Study

The information gathered in this study may be generalized only to the students on the main campus of Blanche Ely High School and the students of Blanche Ely High School who were located on the campus of Broward Community College during the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years. The sample was limited to 222 students, 74 in the ESTP group, 74 in the random sample, and 74 on the community college campus during the 1999-2000 school year. The second year of the study included only term one of the school year, August 2000 through February 2001 and included the same 222 students who were promoted to the tenth grade. Although the students in each group were exposed to different instructors, all teachers in this study held valid teaching certificates and were certified at the secondary level by the State of Florida. The limitation of varied instruction was minimized through standardized curriculum objectives that each instructor followed. The three groups were provided the same opportunities related to special services, including orientation procedures, parent conferences, and tutoring. The selection
process and entrance criteria were the same for students who participated in ESTP and for those who participated in the LCA program. The ESTP students also have a select team of 4 teachers who have a common planning period. The program also provides special shirts for the students, although they are not required to wear them every week.

Definitions of Terms

4+1 schedule: a weekly class schedule allowing students to take their regular high school classes Monday through Thursday on extended days, with Fridays used as an alternative to summer school.

Control group: a randomly selected sample of students excluding limited English proficiency students and special education students.

ESTP: the acronym for the formal title Environmental Science Technology Program. This program is housed on the main campus of Blanche Ely High School.

Grade Point Average: a mathematical representation of the points achieved in each class based on a letter grade as determined by the grading scale adopted by the School Board of Broward County, Florida.

Incoming or rising ninth grade student: a student who has been promoted from the eighth grade for the first time.

LCA: the acronym for Learning Community Academy as in the formal name: The Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy that is located on the campus of Broward Community College in Coconut Creek, Florida.
**Limited English proficiency:** students whose first language is not English and who are currently enrolled in English as a second language classes in the high school.

**Low socio-economic status:** students who qualify for participation in the federal free/reduced lunch program.

**Main Campus:** the original site and buildings for Blanche Ely High School, located in Pompano Beach, Florida.

**Over-age student:** a student who has been retained in a prior grade making him older than his peers who have not been retained.

**Remedial courses:** classes that assist students in the development of basic academic skills.

**School Climate:** feelings that are associated with academics, the environment, and relationships including student to student relationships, student to teacher relationships, teacher to teacher relationships, teacher to administration relationships, administration to administration relationships, and the relationship of the community to the school as a whole.

**Social Acceptance:** the feeling that is associated with belonging to a group. For purposes in this study, the group refers to a social environment within an educational setting.

**Special education students:** students who have been classified as learning disabled through psychological testing and are currently enrolled in special education classes at the high school.
Student Attendance: the number of school days a student is present in school based on a 180-day school year.

Traditional high school: the main campus of the school containing the original buildings on the original site.

Transition: the developmental change from one environment to another.

Weighted Grade Point Average: a mathematical representation of the points achieved in each honor class based on a letter grade as determined by the grading scale adopted by the School Board of Broward County, Florida. Honor classes are given a higher point value for each letter grade than regular classes.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the problem of transitioning eighth grade students into ninth grade. The problems associated with the transition process presented the logic for this study. Also included in Chapter 1 is the Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Significance of the Study, The Research Hypothesis, Population and Sample, Limitations of the Study, and Definitions of Terms. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature as it relates to the ninth grade transition process and its effects on student achievement. This review also includes excerpts from studies on leading change, school climate, and year-round education. Chapter 3 provides a description of the methodology of the study. Chapter 4 contains a presentation of the data and an analysis of the findings. Chapter 5 contains the summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for the study.
CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE

The problem investigated in this study was to compare three 8th grade to 9th grade transition programs in a selected high school in South Florida. This study investigated whether the educational environment had an impact on student achievement, daily student attendance, and school climate. The three programs investigated for this study were the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy, the Environmental Science Technology Program, and the traditional eighth grade to ninth grade program totaled 222 students. This study also investigated the impact of returning the ninth grade students from the community college campus to the traditional high school in the tenth grade and its effect on student achievement and attendance.

Specifically, this study determined which educational environment had the greatest impact on student achievement as measured by their grade point average (GPA), student daily attendance, and school climate as determined by the administration of the National Association of Secondary School Principals School Climate Survey (NASSP). These three transitional programs were compared during the 1999-2001 school years.

The NASSP School Climate Survey was administered to 222 students involved in this study to determine their opinions on school climate. The 222 students surveyed represented 74 students from the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy housed on the community college campus; 74 students from the Environmental Science Technology
Program housed on the traditional high school campus; and 74 students from the traditional high school program housed on the high school campus.

Purpose of the Study

This purpose of this study was to determine which school environment had the most positive impact on eighth graders transitioning into the ninth grade as determined by GPA, attendance, and school climate. Once this is determined, school officials can decide which environment is most beneficial to increasing student achievement, attendance, and school climate at the ninth grade level.

Review of Literature

The review of literature pertaining to this subject was divided into five related areas (a) leadership and the process of change, (b) school climate, (c) year-round education, (d) transition programs in the United States, and (e) leadership in Blanche Ely High School, Broward County, Florida.

The Leadership Process and Change

Leadership is a quality that manifests a variety of characteristics. Those characteristics change as the needs of organizations change. What constituted a successful leader in the early part of the twentieth century may not constitute a successful leader in the early part of the twenty-first century. Different leadership styles result in various dimensions of effectiveness (Kotter, 1996).

The command and control leadership style of the 1920s might have a negative impact on the organizational structures of today. The authoritarian-bureaucratic model of earlier times was a necessary function of the industrialized society. Participatory
management was not a term in the organizational system of that era. Warren Bennis (1993) most aptly describes the differences between the philosophies of the 1920s compared with the 1990s. He determined that the leaders who succeed in organizations today would be the antithesis of the authoritarian leaders of our bureaucratic past.

Guthrie & Reed (1991) suggested that leadership is a quality that enables an individual to promote a vision, and inspire and motivate others to embrace that vision while focusing on the goals of the organization. This definition most closely mirrors the current philosophy in educational management.

By understanding and appreciating the talents of others, an effective leader can gain commitment to the mission through the identification of teacher-leaders. These leaders can assist in the change process by making the change easier for others through positive reinforcement and involvement. Kouzes and Posner (1990) expressed the process well. Because leadership development is ultimately self-development, in the end, the leadership challenge is a personal challenge.

Leading organizations for stability and change is a continuous process involving planning, organizing, time allocation, resources, and communication at all levels. Leadership can be defined as the process of influencing the behaviors and attitudes of individuals and/or groups in an effort to move an organization toward its vision (Kotter, 1996). An effective leader can build an effective organization through motivation, inspiration, encouragement, effective problem solving skills, and empowerment. Guthrie and Reed (1991) proposed that leadership is a quality that enables an individual to promote a vision, and inspire and motivate others to embrace that vision while focusing on the goals of the organization.
An organization relies on the strength of its leaders and the motivation of its workers to progress in its mission. As the needs of an organization change, so must the people within the organization. Leaders must build the capacity for change within their organization prior to implementation. One way to begin building the capacity for change is through the team approach (Senge, 1995). Through this concept, leaders can begin to empower individuals to take control and begin the process of implementing the changes needed to move the organization forward. Warren Bennis (1984) describes empowerment and the effects of leadership in an essay: An Invented Life: Reflections on Leadership and Change (Chapter 5).

Empowerment is the collective effect of leadership. In organizations with effective leaders, empowerment is most effective in four themes: People feel significant. Everyone feels that he or she makes a difference to the success of the organization where they feel empowered, people feel that what they do has meaning and significance.

1. Learning and competence matter. Leaders value learning and mastery, and so do the people who work for leaders.

2. People are part of a community. Where there is leadership, there is a team, a family, a unity. Even people who do not especially like each other feel the sense of a community.

3. Work is exciting. Where there are leaders, work is stimulating, challenging, fascinating, and fun. An essential ingredient in organizational leadership is pulling rather than pushing people toward a goal. A pull style of influence attracts and energizes people to enroll in an exciting vision of the future. It motivates through
identification, rather than through rewards and punishments. Leaders articulate and
embody the ideals toward which the organization strives (Bennis, 1984).

When change is evident, leaders must provide time and support to allow
individuals to feel comfortable not only with the organization, but within themselves,
their knowledge, their competence, and their adaptability to be able to not only accept the
change, but to feel good about it (Kotter, 1996).

The use of teams is a way to promote change from the inside, through the
individuals who must work with the change. Leaders can advance the development of
high performing teams by setting goals, providing time within the workday to meet, and
by giving the team members the power to implement the decisions that are made. Peter
Senge (1996) was asked what he would do first as a principal to implement a change in a
school. His response was:

I'd find the teachers who really had some commitment to doing something
different. I don't think that principals can establish an environment in a vacuum.
But a principal can pull together a group of people who really could start to
establish an environment. So the very first thing I'd do would be to get those who
are committed to doing things differently talking to one another. (p. 213)

Senge is taking the steps toward developing a high performing team. He
emphasizes that the process has two dimensions. One is creating a reflective
environment and a degree of safety where individuals can rediscover what they really
care about. The second dimension is to bring those people together in such a way that
their individual visions can start to interact. Once people begin to talk to each other, they
begin to see that they can make a difference. The leader in a school, as in any
organization, must assist the team by creating a vision, setting a goal, providing time for
the teachers to meet during the school day, supplying resources, and empowering them to make decisions.

There is a fundamental set of characteristics that are essential for a leader to be effective in leading an organization through the change process while maintaining stability. These characteristics include having the capacity to create both a personal vision as well as a vision for the organization, having the ability to respond to the needs of individuals within the organization, and the ability to continually reflect on the goals and procedures that move the organization forward (Kotter, 1996). An effective leader is able to build a shared vision through a supportive and open communication process. This strategy develops ownership of the mission within individuals and within teams. Senge asserts that there can be little significant change in an organization if the change is driven from the top-down. There must be genuine commitment throughout all levels of an organization if it is to survive the process of change. Senge (1996) has worked with managers and teams to develop learning capabilities that center around five related disciplines: systems thinking, mental models, open dialogue, personal vision, and shared vision. Using these initiatives, organizations can develop high performing teams that will advance the organization toward its goals while maintaining a stable environment.

Stability within an organization is essential for individuals to feel safe and secure in their job environment. Stability is threatened when there is talk of a change. Leaders must allay the fears of its associates through an open communication process. People tend to be less productive when they feel insecure within the organization (Bennis, 1984).

Frederick Herzberg (1950) maintained that until a person felt safe in an environment, the organization's needs would not be met. Poor hygienic factors such as
job security, fair treatment, adequate conditions, and interpersonal relations can negatively impact an individual's job performance. Herzberg and his colleagues proposed that job satisfaction motivates workers. Motivator factors such as challenging work, recognition, verbal praise, responsibility and promotion satisfy self-esteem issues which promotes job satisfaction which in turn leads to higher levels of performance.

All organizations employ individuals with various needs. In order for the organization to move forward in its mission, the organization must meet the needs of its people. Douglas McGregor (1960) described how leaders view their employees and influence their behaviors through two theories that he named Theory X and Theory Y. McGregor's theories were developed on the basis of attitudes toward people. The first theory, Theory X, stereotypes individuals as unmotivated people who will only work for monetary gains. McGregor feels that these individuals must be closely monitored in order for them to be productive in the organization. He indicates that these individuals are psychologically needy and must feel safe in their environment. This parallels Herzberg's Hygiene Theory. People cannot perform effectively if their basic needs are not being met by the organization.

According to McGregor, traditional organizations with its centralized decision-making, superior-subordinate pyramid, and external control of work is based on assumptions about human nature and human motivation. He feels that management must operate from an understanding of human nature and motivation. Therefore, his Theory X and Theory Y concepts place individuals into one of these two categories. Leaders who operate under the Theory X concept are usually direct, in control, and closely supervise their people in the organization. Leaders who believe that people can be self-directed,
and creative if properly motivated, operate from the standpoint of the Theory Y concept. Effective leaders must learn how to promote the drive and creativity within each individual. Not all individuals will respond favorably to McGregor's suggested style of leadership under each theory. Leaders might have Theory Y assumptions about their people, but depending on the situation, must act in a very direct, controlling manner to move the organization forward. It is more difficult for the leader who operates from the Theory X perspective to change his or her leadership style to effectively promote a true Theory Y individual. Therefore, leadership theories have evolved to meet the needs of changing organizations.

David C. McClelland (1955) believed that people are motivated by one of three needs: the need for affiliation, the need for power, the need for achievement. He stressed that the individuals who desire the need for achievement are usually the most productive within an organization. These productive individuals need the support and positive reinforcement from the organization.

Individuals who are driven by the need for power lead organizations through control, domination, and influence. These types of individuals are sometimes confused with achievers because they are highly successful in accomplishing goals (McClelland, 1955). However, their need to be in charge of everything sometimes hinders the overall performance of the teams within the organization. Team members might feel that they do not have the authority to make decisions without running it by the leader. Through this type of leadership, an organization might be bogged down in the dissemination of information since it all must go through the leader. The communication process is therefore limited in its effectiveness (McClelland, 1955).
A leader who values affiliation is looking for positive interpersonal relationships. This type of leadership values teamwork, collaboration, cooperation, and supportive feedback. McClelland feels that a leader possessing primarily this motivational characteristic might not be a decisive leader. He or she might ride the fence in an effort to please everyone. This would impede productivity and therefore stall the organization's effort toward goal attainment.

Thomas J. Sergiovanni (1984) characterizes leadership in six categories: educational leadership, instructional leadership, organizational leadership, supervisory leadership, administrative leadership, and team leadership. The educational leader is described by Sergiovanni as a statesperson who should be able to communicate the mission of the organization and work for resources to support the programs. Educational leadership is concerned with students as they interact with the total educational program of a school.

The instructional leader according to Sergiovanni deals with one specific discipline exclusive of others. He equates instructional leadership with department chairpersons who are delegated responsibility by the educational leader. Although Sergiovanni uses education in his description of leadership styles, these same characteristics can be attributed to corporations as well since they, too, are departmentalized.

The organizational leader in Sergiovanni's definition needs to be able to deal with concerns that maintain the organization's focus on its vision. There is a definite correlation between the educational leader and the organizational leader. Both leaders must be able to influence and motivate others within their environment. Effective
leadership depends upon how committed the people are to the goals, mission, and vision within the organization.

Supervisory leadership maintains the standards by which the people are assessed. The supervisory role is involvement with the people through direct communication and interaction. Many people within an organization can assume a supervisory role. In education, this is the identification of instructional leaders, team leaders, department heads, and potential administrators (Sergiovanni, 1984). Sergiovanni reported that when teachers experienced effective supervisory leadership, they became more committed to both department and school goals, more motivated to work, more sure of their personal direction, and more confident in their own abilities. This leads to job satisfaction that creates a nurturing, safe-feeling, and stable environment for everyone in the organization.

Administrative leadership, as defined by Sergiovanni, pertains to the ability of the leader to adapt to the external environment while maintaining itself internally. Organizations, especially schools, respond to societal and individual needs by developing and evaluating goals, moving programs forward, promoting staff growth and development, and by developing more effective organizational structures to assure stability while moving toward change. Administrative leadership develops ways to handle the dissemination of information while making routine, day-to-day decisions, and evaluating existing administrative procedures to improve the overall function of the organization.

The success of team leadership depends on the development of mutual support and trust among members of the team. The roles of the members must be interdependent with each member becoming more effective individually as the team becomes more
effective collectively. Above all, there must be a commitment to understanding, appreciating, and working toward a common vision (Sergiovanni, 1984).

Leading an organization for stability and change is a complex process involving planning, organizing, time allocation, resources, and communication at all levels. Theorists do not all agree on the methods that should be employed to maximize the effectiveness of leadership in organizations. However they do currently agree that strong leaders have specific qualities and characteristics that make them effective in their efforts to transform organizations successfully moving them through the process of change while maintaining a stable and secure environment (Kotter, 1996).

Our educational system continues to look for leaders who are not afraid to think out of the box. Increasing student achievement is a national goal. The problem researched in this study will investigate whether changing the educational environment increases student achievement at the ninth grade level.

School Climate

Schools are more than institutions of academic learning. They are complex social systems where relationships between peers, teachers, administrators, and staff play a vital role in the overall academic process. A sense of community reigns. At schools that are socially healthy, students feel a sense of belonging. They forge friendships with their peers and maintain respectful relationships with adults. At schools where the social dynamics are unhealthy, students fight and harass one another, show disrespect for teachers, and feel isolated or alienated from the school community. Most schools are a mixture of both (ASCD, 1999).
When parents, educators, and students share values, beliefs, and ideals about schooling, there is a better chance of creating schools everyone will support. Sociologists James S. Coleman and Thomas Hoffer speculated that the difference between a Catholic high school and a public high school lies in the strongly supportive community built up between parents and teachers...based on a shared set of beliefs and values. Such cohesive communities of adults are almost totally absent from most public schools (Coleman & Hoffer, 1990). Parents of secondary school students are twice as likely as those of primary school students to be among those parents feeling most alienated from their child's school. The findings contained in a survey given in the 1999-2000 school year titled, the Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, reveals that the transition between primary and secondary school is a critical time for students, parents and teachers (Markow, 2000). Family involvement has been linked to advancing academic achievement. Assisting students with their assignments, and showing a sincere interest in their activities while providing emotional support has been attributed to advancing academic achievement (Coleman & Hoffer, 1990).

Peer support is another important influence in academic success. Peers are an important source of companionship and support. Peer interactions are responsible for both positive and negative school experiences. Therefore, if parents are aware of the relationships their child maintains, they can assist in developing and nurturing the positive relationships that may promote a successful school experience (Merz & Furman, 1997).

For teens today, the issue of people getting along together is very important. Students who said that their teachers did a good job of teaching tolerance were more
likely to report that peers from different backgrounds got along very or somewhat well at their school than those who said their teachers did a poor job (Markow, 2000). When parents and teachers were asked about the most important issue facing America today, the Metropolitan Survey revealed that they thought that improving the quality of education was the primary concern. For students, however, the issue of improving the quality of education was second to having people get along with one another (Markow, 2000).

In order to create a sense of community, people must talk to each other. John Dewey argues that forming a community requires communication. For him, communication is the process of sharing experience till it becomes a common possession (Dewey, 1916). Without better communication, people are unlikely to develop the common understandings needed to improve schools and strengthen communities. Dewey challenges educators to reconcile the powerful and sometimes conflicting activities of student and curriculum, individual and group, continuity and interaction, construction and criticism, and interest and effort. He encourages educators to establish interplay between principals and classroom practices, where both are modified and adjusted. Classes should be structured to promote: enriched experience through mastery of a new subject, development of moral character, and cooperative, intelligent thinking (Dewey, 1916). Dewey's pedagogical ideas support the framework from which educators can examine school climate from the vantage point of the classroom. Dewey goes on to explain that traditional education offers a plethora of examples of experiences. Everything depends upon the quality of the experience that the individual has. It is the business of the educator to arrange for the kind of experiences
that, while not repelling the student, engages the student in desirable activities that promote future desirable activities (Dewey, 1938).

People live in various settings, from differing neighborhoods to a multiplicity of work places. They must learn to live with ambiguity and divided affiliations (Dodd & Konzal, 1992). Carol Merz and Gail Furman suggest that schools adopt the following mission to encourage and promote a school climate that is conducive to the advancement of student achievement, mutual respect, and community support:

1. To teach students to live satisfying lives as participants in groups at various levels;

2. To learn to live and work in groups in which differences are accepted and respected;

3. To learn to form groups that provide satisfaction, identity, and security without destroying choices and opportunities for others (Merz & Furman, 1997).

The challenge is to find a way to conceptualize the school as a community where differences are valued rather than feared and in which everyone is invited and encouraged to participate (Dodd & Konzal, 1992). The school itself can be a miniature community in which children practice democratic living. When students learn to work with each other in schools that extends learning into the larger community, the school becomes a microcosm where children practice the behaviors they need as citizens (Dewey, 1916). Many teens feel very responsible for broader societal issues, such as keeping the school safe and having people get along together (Markow, 2000). The social aspect of school life can bring students the greatest joys including lifelong friendships and happy memories, or the greatest angst. For educators, paying attention to the social side of
schooling can mean the difference between a fulfilling job and a psychologically damaging one (ASCD, 1999). Dialogue between parents and teachers, as well as discussions among teens and the adults in their lives, will increase understanding of each other's expectations, the experiences that each one encounters, and the concerns that each one perceives may be important steps to better preparing teens for their future (Markow, 2000).

Thomas C. Valesky et al. (1992) found that a democratic leadership style produced a better school climate than an authoritarian or laissez-faire leadership style. T. W. Cey (1993) found a strong, positive relationship between the principal's leadership style and the organizational climate in twenty schools in Michigan. Climate does affect many student outcomes, including cognitive behavior (Barker, 1963; Brookover, et al., 1978). W. B. Brookover and L. W. Lezotte found a relationship between various school climate factors and student achievement. School climate factors included: high expectations, academic time allocation, accountability, satisfied teachers, parent interest, limited use of special programs, and principal leadership. They reported that school climate accounts for a significant amount of variance in student achievement, with race and socio-economic status controlled (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979).

C. R. Bulach et al. conducted a study in 1992 that related school climate to student achievement. The Leadership Behavioral Matrix, the Tennessee School Climate Inventory, and the Group Openness and Trust was administered to 20 principals and 506 teachers in 20 Kentucky elementary schools. Achievement scores from 2,834 third and fifth graders in the 20 schools were also analyzed. Comparisons between school climate and leadership style revealed a statistically significant difference between leadership style
and the involvement sub-scale of the school climate instruments. The study also reported that twelve of the principals who were surveyed used a personal approach in their leadership style. This type of approach involves meeting people’s needs and involving parents and the community in the decision-making process. The study concluded that schools with higher levels of parent/community involvement and who are led by principals who value the personal approach to education may enhance their students’ achievement by promoting a positive school climate (Bulach, 1992).

This study compares three groups of ninth grade students, two located on a regular high school campus, and one located on a community school campus. One of the two groups located on the regular high school campus is treated as a cohort, with selected teachers, and a common program objective. This profile parallels the profile of the ninth grade group located on the community college campus. The research in this study will investigate if the school climate in each educational environment has a positive or negative impact on grade point averages and attendance rates.

**Year-Round Education**

The United States developed its traditional nine-month (September to June) calendar as an answer to the needs of an agrarian society that required the assistance of all members of a family to successfully manage the farm (DeJarnett, 1994; Glines, 1995; O’Dell, 1997). Glines (1995) stated that other reasons for the September through June school calendar included the lack of money to implement a longer calendar, the existence of poor roads, and a general lack for the value of education. However, year-round schools have been present in this country, in various forms, since the 1600s. Several schools opened its doors for students to attend summer enrichment programs.
Massachusetts was one of the first states to mandate that towns with 100 or more families must provide students with the opportunity to attend school twelve months a year. During the 1900s, the year-round approach was implemented in towns including: Bluffton, Indiana (1904), Omaha, Nebraska (1925), Newark, New Jersey (1912), Minot, South Dakota, and Nashville, Tennessee (1926). These schools introduced the year-round calendar for a variety of reasons relating mostly to improving student achievement and the existing curriculum (Glines, 1997). These schools existed until the start of World War II. It was at that time that the American school system was forced to readdress its needs. Since women and children had to take their place to keep the economy running while the men fought for the country’s freedom, it was not feasible to maintain the educational calendar on a year-round basis. Uniformity among school calendars became necessary to assure that the remaining labor pool could be maximized (DeJarnett, 1994). As a result, the twelve-month school calendar nearly disappeared. Late in the 1950s and early 1960s there was a spark of interest in returning to the twelve-month calendar in an effort to compete with the academic and scientific achievements of other nations (Glines, 1995). But the resurgence was short-lived. Achievements, such as Sputnik, forced educators in the United States to examine the current practices and search for ways to become more competitive. The year-round approach was rejected as an effective means to meet this goal (Glines, 1995).

During the two years, from 1968-1970 in the states of California, Illinois, Minnesota, and Missouri, year-round schools experienced a revival as an answer to relieving overcrowding (Glines, 1995; Merino, 1983). However, by the late 1970s, schools and districts withdrew from the use of the year-round calendar when the problem
of overcrowding was alleviated (Glines, 1995). Glines (1995) stated that the discontinuance of the year-round calendar was due to the fact that these schools and districts did not have the philosophical foundation in place for continuation of its use as a tool to improve student achievement. In the early 1990s, the concept of year-round education (YRE) began to gain some measure of acceptance as a viable method for improving student achievement rather than to simply relieve a burgeoning population in a given geographic area (Glines, 1995).

**Year Round Calendar Configurations**

There are many different year-round calendar configurations. Among the most popular are the 45-15, the 60-20, and the 45-10. These calendars dictate that students attend school for a specified number of days (e.g., 45 or 60) and then have a break from their regular class. This break is designated by the term intersession. Longer breaks, such as a winter break, a spring break and a summer break are also a part of the year-round calendar.

Single track scheduling is used when all students are grouped together and share common breaks and vacations. The traditional calendar approach is an example of single track scheduling. However, a school can operate on a Year-Round Education (YRE) calendar and remain on a single-track system.

Multi-track scheduling is used in systems that wish to increase the capacity of their facilities. The student body and faculty are divided into groups, or tracks. At any given time during the year, one track is on vacation while the others remain in session. The school building is thus utilized during the entire year.
School-within-a-school is another type of year-round school calendar and an example of a multi-track schedule. Schools using this type of scheduling offer year-round and traditional calendars within the same school. This type of scheduling is usually a method of transition and is generally short term in nature.

One high school in Broward County, Florida experimented with a four-day school week, Monday through Thursday, with summer school classes held on Fridays. Known as the 4+1 Classroom Broward schedule, students and teachers found that this configuration lent itself well toward advancing student achievement. Test scores on the High School Competency Test rose significantly in the first year of the schedule's implementation (Broward County School Board).

**Year-Round Education and Student Achievement**

The YRE approach has been reported to be effective in increasing student achievement in the areas of math and reading (Ballinger, 1997; Cason, 1995; Curry, et al. 1997; Delamett, 1994; Haenn, 1996; Nebo School District, 1986). Researchers state that scheduling the school year differently could help arrest summer learning loss (Ballinger, 1997; Ballinger, et al. 1987; New York Department of Education [NYDOE], 1978). Learning occurs at a more constant and controlled rate in YRE schools. Therefore, less time was needed for review when returning from a three-month summer break. According to the New York Department of Education (1978) less learning loss was noted in the academic achievement of disadvantaged youths. The pace of delivery and remediation opportunities allowed all students, but particularly those with low socio-economic status, a greater chance of high achievement Ballinger (1987), (1988), (1989), Curry et al. (1997). Year-round education is said to be a catalyst for school curriculum
change and reform (Carson 1995). When schools change from their 180-day, September-June calendars, educators look to standardized test scores as indicators of success. In those schools that chose a year-round schedule, standardized test scores were likely to remain stable and often rose in the subject of reading (Carson 1995). Ballinger, et al. (1987) reported that schools on the year-round schedule for more than one year either maintained scores or performed better than their counterparts that were educated on a traditional calendar. This was particularly true for minority and disadvantaged groups of students.

McCasland (1992) supervised a study of an elementary school in its first year on a year-round schedule. Test scores indicated that the students scored significantly higher in all sub-test areas than students in comparison schools.

Bechtel (1991) directed a study in California, comparing the academic achievement of third grade students in eight elementary schools within a district during the 1989-1990 school year. The sample consisted of 525 students who took the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. The results concluded that the schools participating in the YRE approach scored significantly higher than the students who were tested in the comparison schools.

An attitudinal survey was conducted in Crockett Intermediate School located in Conroe, Texas. It revealed that parents were satisfied with the year-round schedule. They also believed that their children showed large gains in what they were learning on the YRE calendar as opposed to the traditional calendar approach (Baker, 1990).

Oxnard School District in California has operated on a YRE calendar since the early 1980s. Brekke (1986, 1990) reported that scores on the California Assessment
Program (CAP) showed significant gains. Brekke revisited the study of 1986 once again in 1992 to determine further effects of the YRE calendar. Brekke (1992) reported that gains in student achievement continued.

Pelavin (1978) organized a study to determine the impact of the YRE calendar in the areas of summer learning loss, social aspects, economic concerns, and educational elements. He concluded that there was no impact from the use of the year-round schedule. A review of the literature was conducted by Shields and LaRoque (1996). They concluded that while there was no positive impact on learning from the use of the YRE calendar, there may, in fact, be a benefit in the delivery model for at-risk populations. Two gifted classes, one on the traditional calendar, and one on the year-round calendar, were studied by Ritter (1992). He reported that the results were inconsistent over the year. At mid-year, those using the traditional calendar scored better on standardized tests. By the end of the year, those students attending school under the YRE calendar approach outsore their counterparts. Ultimately, there was no statistically significant difference.

Mussatti (1981) reported a lack of data when evaluating the effectiveness of the YRE approach. Parents surveyed reported that they perceived a great benefit from the year-round model. However, it was difficult to quantify the results.

A study was conducted among three schools in Orange County, Florida, one single track and two multi-track schools. Students' achievement test data showed no effects from the YRE calendar (Fardig, 1991). Kuner-Roth (1985) conducted a study of suburban Chicago school children using a pretest-posttest design. Both sets of data
reported the same results as Fardig. No gains or losses could be attributed to the use of the year-round calendar.

The California Department of Education contracted Quinlan, George, and Emmett (1987) to examine the effects of the year-round schedule. They concluded that although the multi-track year-round schedule addressed the issue of overcrowding, the students who attended these multi-track schools did not do as well academically as other children who attended school under the traditional calendar. They noted that most schools using the YRE, multi-track approach were located in areas with a low socio-economic status. These factors may have impacted the outcome of the study. However, these researchers did note that schools using a single-track year-round schedule performed at or above expected levels.

Ninth Grade Transition Programs in the United States

In an effort to increase the success of ninth grade students in all phases of the transition process, high schools around the United States have implemented various activities and programs to create a support system for their incoming freshmen.

One example is Broughton High School in Raleigh, North Carolina, where a volunteer committee of upper level students contacts all incoming ninth grade students and invites them to an orientation program prior to the opening of the school year. The rising ninth graders tour the school, receive their class schedules, meet their teachers, and receive materials about the school and their classes. They also find out about clubs, activities, and sports. Once school begins, freshmen receive a second phone call from the student volunteer committee personally inviting them to the first football game of the
season (Umphrey, 1999). The personal invitation promotes feelings of social acceptance by making the ninth grader feel that their presence at the function is important.

Another example of a transitional program is the one at Isidore Newman School in New Orleans, Louisiana. This school provides upper classmen to be New Student Buddies to each incoming ninth grader. After eighth grade, the Buddies write to each other over the summer. The Buddy then invites the rising ninth grade student to a day at a water park the week before school begins. There is also a formal orientation program at the school where freshmen are briefed about schedules and activities, tour the school, and locate the classrooms on their schedules (Umphrey, 1999). These activities are designed to help the ninth grade student feel that they are a part of the new high school population. Through this transition process, relationships are built creating feelings of social acceptance.

Students at La Joya High School in Texas developed a survival guide for their incoming ninth graders. The guide spots a traffic theme with such topics as Put the Brakes on Procrastination, Meeting People is a Two-Way Street, and Preparing for the Long Road Ahead. Tips on time management, getting along with teachers, and getting involved with high school life are stressed.

An example of another transition program is found at West Morris Central High School in Chester, New Jersey. This program called REACH 2000 provides long-term transition support to rising ninth grade students. High school juniors are paired with groups of four to five eighth grade students. Beginning in December, monthly meeting are held to discuss all aspects of high school life including scheduling, course selections, activities, athletics, and peer pressure as well as other areas of concern. The upper
classmen participate in the eighth grade open house for students and parents, help administer a career inventory, assist in testing for honors placement, and host the eighth graders for a day at the high school. When school opens in the fall, the juniors, who are now seniors, present a half-day orientation program for the new ninth graders. The opening of the first day of school is delayed for all other students as the freshmen are made comfortable in their new surroundings, meet their new teachers, counselors, and administrators, help them with their lockers, and receive information about policies, activities and athletics. Every freshman is given a day planner to assist with organization and assignments. The morning ends with a breakfast for the seniors and their freshmen before the other students arrive on campus.

A ninth grade transition program located in Pennsylvania is a federally funded initiative that partners middle schools with colleges, community organizations, and businesses in an effort to promote academic rigor for college readiness. Started in 1998, Gear Up builds on existing efforts that use mentoring, tuition assistance, and curriculum support to expose students to the college experience. In Philadelphia, eighth grade students at John Paul Jones Middle School work with Temple University students in their middle school classroom setting and on the college campus. The intent is to generate interest in attending college by developing a relationship with college students and by allowing the middle school students to become familiar with the university campus early in their school experience. The core focus of this program is to increase the academic rigor beginning in the sixth grade and stimulate interest by raising aspirations (Gehring, 2000).
Florida’s LCA vs. Pennsylvania’s Gear Up

The major difference between the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy (LCA) and the Gear Up program is that the students in the LCA program are housed exclusively on the college campus, while the eighth graders in Philadelphia only visit the Temple University college classrooms. These visitations are more than just a walk around the college campus (Gehring, 2000). The Gear Up program focuses on raising the standard of academic expectation at the eighth grade level. The program promotes a relationship with Temple University by allowing eighth grade students to see college students at work in their university classrooms. University students also tutor and mentor the eighth graders encouraging them to meet the demands of high school. Gear Up advances the rigor of the eighth grade core subjects to better prepare students to meet the challenges of academic life at the university (Gehring, 2000). The Gear Up program is not as concentrated or intense an experience as the LCA program where students study daily on the college campus in college classrooms. The LCA program promotes ninth grade academic advancement while providing students the opportunity to identify with the college environment on a daily basis. The coursework at LCA is rigorous and demanding. Students are expected to maintain a 3.0 grade point average to be eligible for dual enrollment college classes. Eligible students may begin dual enrollment classes in the summer after tenth grade. This early exposure to actual college classes with college professors gives LCA students the opportunity to transition from high school academics to university standards.
Leadership in Blanche Ely High School Broward County, Florida

John P. Kotter in his book, Leading Change, summarizes the process of transformation by outlining eight steps of the change process. These steps are: establishing a sense of urgency, creating a guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the vision, empowering others to take action, generating short term wins, consolidating gains and producing more change, and embedding the culture.

A school principal must be a visionary who is able to effect positive changes in the school organization by empowering others and leading them toward a single vision. In order to effect any change, the capacity for change must first exist.

At Blanche Ely High School in Pompano Beach, Florida, one principal has looked beyond what tradition has dictated. Seeing urgency in raising the quality of student achievement that has crossed the threshold from the feeder middle schools through the doors of Blanche Ely High School, this principal dared to challenge the system. The following statistics were reported in the SAT Score Report Eighth Edition taken from the School Board of Broward County Testing and Evaluation Department as reported in the Sun-Sentinel on January 21, 1999:

Fifty percent of the school districts in the state of Florida report that 1 out of 4 ninth grade students fail to earn a 2.0 grade point average by the end of their first year of high school.

Of the ninth graders in the Broward County School District, 56.5 percent are reported to score below the 45th percentile in reading.

Of the ninth graders in Broward County, 38.2 percent fail to achieve a 2.0 grade point average by the end of their freshman year in high school.
Dr. Earlean Smiley began the change process in 1998 by establishing a sense of urgency. She formulated a vision to establish a working partnership with Broward Community College. She then shared the vision with two key individuals who could assist in leading the change forward, the North Area Director and the North Area Superintendent. Her vision included the establishment of a ninth grade learning community that would be housed on the north campus of Broward Community College. She theorized that if ninth graders were away from their upper level peers where peer pressure and distractions were kept to a minimum, average eighth grade students would excel academically as high school freshmen. This would benefit the community college in the long run since these students, nurtured on the college campus, would continue to achieve academically and eventually become dually enrolled students shared by both the high school and the community college. The area director and the area superintendent empowered Dr. Smiley to move forward with the vision. A written proposal was submitted to the School Board and approved. A contractual agreement to solidify the partnership between the School Board and Broward Community College was drawn and signed. The Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy would have its opportunity to develop and grow.

The next phase involved coordinating a team that would be directly responsible for developing a strategic plan that would coordinate the services of the various departments that would be involved in this new initiative. An administrator that would oversee the project was appointed. Meetings were scheduled with the key personnel at the north campus of Broward Community College. These individuals included the
Provost, the Dean of Academic Affairs, and the Dean of Student Affairs. As the vision was unfolded at the initial meeting, it was evident that the development of this new learning community could be a win-win situation for all parties involved. Plans for providing classroom space and the need for buy-in from the community college faculty were immediately discussed.

The team made arrangements to discuss the vision with the college department heads. The department heads agreed that the partnership would enhance the quality of the student that would be attending the college in the future. Therefore, they were willing to support the mission. The final thrust for acceptance involved a full faculty meeting with the Broward Community College professors. With positive communication emanating from both the department heads and the offices of the deans prior to the meeting, the faculty gave the program its complete vote of confidence thus creating the guiding coalition.

The team now spent time strategizing the organizational structure of the curriculum. The desired outcome would be to exceed the county's expectations in the area of student achievement and promote the partnership with the community college by raising the bar on acceptable standards. The team determined that reading and math would be stressed. The students in the academy would complete two units in math during their freshman year rather than the usual one.

In order to meet the needs of a variety of students who would all meet the criteria for entrance, three levels of math would have to be offered: Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. Both regular and honors credits would be available in all core subjects offered. Students would also complete two units of a foreign language during their year
at the academy. This would place them in position for entrance into most colleges and universities. The team selected Spanish and determined that once again, in order to meet the needs of eligible students, all levels would be offered stressing individualized instruction and independent study. The team also decided that an important part of developing the entire person at the ninth grade level should include a course that would instill self-confidence, self-esteem, leadership qualities, and goal setting skills. JrROTC was selected. The remaining courses in the curriculum were Earth Science, Critical Thinking Skills, and English. The students would also be on the 4+1 Classroom Broward schedule. Monday through Thursday the students would take English, Math, Spanish, and JrROTC. On Fridays, students would be scheduled for Earth Science and Critical Thinking Skills. Fridays would allow time for individual projects, and tutoring.

The next phase of the process began with the team from the high school communicating the vision to the guidance directors at the middle schools. This was an essential element in spreading the vision of the academy to the parents of the prospective students. Orientation meetings were scheduled with the eighth grade students who met the criteria for entrance. Fliers were distributed at the meetings to generate interest. Later, a mass mailing was sent throughout the county. The team worked together to return telephone calls from parents who needed questions answered. An orientation meeting for the parents was scheduled at the Omni Auditorium on the BCC North Campus. The presentation included information regarding transportation, lunch arrangements, attendance, dress code, curriculum, and parent responsibilities should their child be selected for entrance into the program.
A parent/student contract that detailed the expectations within the academy was developed by the team and introduced at the orientation session. The contract was well received by the parents. They commended the structure of the program especially noting the dress code.

As word of a new visionary program spread, teachers from other schools began to call to ask about the possibility of securing a teaching position at LCA. The team addressed this issue by developing a comprehensive application process. The team knew that the teachers who would be selected for the academy should possess specific qualities to assure that the program would have uniqueness, personalization, and effective educational strategies to enhance student achievement. Interested teachers completed the written application and were screened through a committee interview process. The team of teachers was selected and the training began. Through staff development over the summer months, the teacher team was empowered with the task of creating a stimulating and challenging program that would align with the mission and vision of the development team.

Throughout the summer months, student applications kept coming in slowly, yet steadily. The team decided to do one last mass mailing at the end of July to spark new interest. More applications arrived and the team selected 86 qualified students to begin the program. A new student orientation program was scheduled in August. It was held in the North Regional Library auditorium at Broward Community College.

The orientation included the introduction of the development team, the teachers, and a tour of their new LCA classrooms. The Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy opened its doors the first day of school, August 1999.
The first major obstacle that confronted the development team was the creation of a lunch program. Since Broward County students are entitled to receive free or reduced lunch, it was necessary to work within the system to create a way to accommodate this service. Meetings were held with the county food service directors. It was determined that Coconut Creek High School, given its proximity to the north campus of BCC, would deliver the meals at a specified time.

This arrangement worked well until the health department decided that the food was not being delivered either hot enough or cold enough by their set standards. Meetings were convened to brainstorm ideas to solve this dilemma. The county suggested gourmet cold sandwiches, the variety to be determined by the students. The academy administrator and the teachers met with the students and explained the problem. Rather than directly asking them about the sandwiches, the students were asked to come up with their own solutions. Through this method, the problem was solved since the students came up with the idea of specialized sandwiches themselves.

In an effort to transition the academy students back to the main campus for their tenth grade year, the students will take classes on Fridays on the main campus. They will not be placed all together in the same class; therefore increasing socialization with others. As these students advance in high school, they will be exposed to more opportunities on the college campus. In their eleventh grade year, those who maintain a 3.0 grade point average will be taking their first college classes that will be transferable to the university of their choice. Then in their senior year, they will be classified early admissions students and complete their freshman year of college before they receive their high school diploma.
The eight-stage process of developing this vision is not complete. More change is evident as new ninth grade students are accepted into the academy, and the new tenth grade students continue to adjust to an advanced curriculum and a different campus life. The broad picture is to engrain a culture within the school that furthers the educational opportunities of all students. The Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy is just the beginning.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 discussed several topics related to the process of changing the educational structure in our schools. The fundamental objective addressed throughout the sections is the need to increase student achievement and attendance. The first topic addressed the issue of leadership and the process of change. The problem researched in this study will investigate whether changing the educational environment increases student achievement and attendance at the ninth grade level.

The second topic discussed in this chapter is school climate. This investigation will compare three groups of students, two of which are housed on a regular high school campus, while the third group is housed on a community college campus. Using a school climate survey supplied by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, this study will analyze the data obtained from all three groups and determine if school climate is related to increased school achievement and attendance.

Year-round education is a controversial issue throughout the United States. This chapter explained how changing the calendar of the school year might positively impact student achievement and attendance. The three groups used in this study are currently on a modified calendar. This was discussed in detail in this chapter.
The process of transitioning from the eighth grade into the ninth grade has been a concern of educators throughout the country. This study will attempt to provide vital data that might support evidence that school environment plays a significant role in increasing student achievement and attendance at the ninth grade level.
CHAPTER 3

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem investigated in this study was to compare three 8th grade to 9th grade transition programs in a selected high school in South Florida, Blanche Ely High School, during the 1999 through 2001 school years. This study investigated whether the educational environment had an impact on student achievement, daily student attendance, and school climate. The three programs investigated for this study were the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy, the Environmental Science Technology Program, and the traditional eighth grade to ninth grade program. This study investigated the impact of returning the Learning Community Academy ninth grade students from the community college campus to the traditional high school in the tenth grade and its effect on student achievement and attendance.

Specifically, this study determined which educational environment had the greatest impact on student achievement as measured by their grade point average (GPA), student daily attendance, and school climate as determined by the administration of the National Association of Secondary School Principals School Climate Survey (NASSP). These three transitional programs were compared during the 1999-2001 school years.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine which school environment had the most positive impact on eighth graders transitioning into the ninth grade as determined by
GPA, attendance, and school climate. Once this is determined, school officials can
decide which environment is most beneficial to increasing student achievement,
attendance, and school climate at the ninth grade level.

Research Hypothesis

This study was guided by the following research questions and corresponding
hypothesis. The hypotheses were stated in the null form and were tested at a .05 alpha
level:

Question 1: How does the educational environment impact student
achievement?

Ho1: There will be no significant difference in the mean academic performance
between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school campus
compared to those ninth grade students educated on the community college campus as
determined by their weighted grade point averages.

Question 2: How does the educational environment impact student attendance?

Ho2: There will be no significant individual differences in daily class
attendance between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school
campus compared to those ninth grade students educated on the community college
campus as determined by their attendance records.

Question 3: Is academic performance maintained in grade ten when the LCA
students return to the traditional high school setting?

Ho3: There will be no significant individual differences in academic
performance in the tenth grade between the students educated on the traditional high
school campus compared to those students educated on the community college campus as determined by their weighted grade point average.

Question 4: Is there a relationship between school climate, attendance, and GPA as determined by student responses on the NASSP School Climate Survey?

H04: There will be no significant differences in academic performance between the students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those students educated on the community college campus as a result of individual attitudes as determined by answers provided on the school climate survey.

Population and Sample

This study compared three groups of ninth grade students in a selected high school in South Florida. The three groups were ninth grade students who attended Blanche Ely High School in Broward County during the 1999-2001 school years. Two of the groups were composed of selected students who were voluntarily placed into one of two equivalent programs. The first program is the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy or LCA. This program is housed on the north campus of Broward Community College. The second program is the Environmental Science Technology Program or ESTP. This program mirrors the LCA program, but is housed on the main campus of Blanche Ely High School. The third group was randomly selected from ninth grade students who attended Blanche Ely High School’s main campus. This traditional high school random sample served as the control group. The traditional high school group was taken from an alphabetical listing of all ninth grade students. The total number of students on the list was divided by the number nine to assure that the alphabet was evenly
distributed for a reliable random sample. Special education students (ESE) and those students who were classified as limited language proficiency (ESOL) were eliminated from this study. If the ninth name was either a student in the LCA program, the ESTP program, an ESOL student, or an ESE student, the name above the ninth name was selected. Should that name not meet the criteria, the name below the ninth name was selected. Factors that were associated with academic success such as low socio-economic status, an urban community, and ethnicity were represented equally in all groups. The equity found within the three groups was not stratified for the purposes of this study. This equity was a result of a random occurrence. The research is based on the dependent factor that during the 1999-2000 school year, one group of ninth grade students (LCA) was housed on a community college campus, while the second group (ESTP) and the third group (the Random Sample) were housed on the traditional high school campus two miles from the college campus. The random sample traditional high school group was used to determine if being in a special group, such as LCA or ESTP, had any significant impact on the results of the data collected in this study.

Instruments

The questionnaire used for this study was published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals titled School Climate Survey (NASSP). Fifty-five questions relating to teacher-student relationships, security and maintenance, administration, student academic orientation, student behavioral values, guidance, student-peer relationships, parent and community-school relationships, instructional
management, and student activities were asked of the 222 students involved in this study. The NASSP School Climate Survey collects data about perceptions on 10 subscales.

*Teacher-Student Relationships:* Perceptions about the quality of the interpersonal and professional relationships between teachers and students.

*Security and Maintenance:* Perceptions about the quality of maintenance and the degree of security people feel at the school.

*Administration:* Perceptions of the degree to which school administrators are effective in communicating with different role groups and in setting high performance expectations for the teachers and students.

*Student Academic Orientation:* Perceptions about student attention to task and concern for achievement at school.

*Student Behavioral Values:* Perceptions about student self-discipline and tolerance for others.

*Guidance:* Perceptions of the quality of academic and career guidance and personal counseling services available to students.

*Student-Peer Relationships:* Perceptions about students' care and respect for one another and their mutual cooperation.

*Parent and Community-School Relationships:* Perceptions of the amount and quality of involvement in the school of parents and other community members.

*Instructional Management:* Perceptions of the efficiency and effectiveness of the teacher classroom organization and use of classroom time.

*Student Activities:* Perceptions about opportunities for and actual participation of students in school sponsored activities (NASSP, 1988).
Instrument Reliability

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) performed pilot and normative studies. The survey instrument was administered to 14,600 students. The NASSP School Climate Survey is normed for use with students in grades 6-12. Instrument readability is rated at grades 5-6 (NASSP, 1988).

The instrument was found to have a high face validity and good psychometric properties. The average internal consistency reliability of the climate subscales was 0.81, with a range from 0.76 to 0.83 (NASSP, 1988).

Content validity is the extent to which items on a scale are representative of the domains of interest. Construct validity is concerned with the meaningfulness of a test, whether it really measures the underlying trait or characteristic that gives it meaning. During development of the instrument, emphasis was placed on scale and item conceptualization in order to support strong content and construct validity. The items were field tested and subjected to factor analysis. Review of the instrument through factor analysis supported strong content and construct validity for the school climate survey instrument (NASSP, 1988).

Methodology

This purpose of this study is to determine which school environment had the most positive impact on eighth graders transitioning into the ninth grade as determined by GPA, attendance, and school climate. Once this is determined, school officials can decide which environment is most beneficial to increasing student achievement, attendance, and school climate at the ninth grade level. The methodology necessary to
achieve this purpose is described. The participants involved, the instruments utilized and
the procedure selected are explained.

The NASSP School Climate Survey was administered to 222 students involved in
this study to determine their opinions on school climate. The 222 students surveyed
represented 74 students from the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy housed on
the community college campus; 74 students from the Environmental Science Technology
Program housed on the traditional high school campus; and seventy 74 students from the
traditional high school program housed on the high school campus.

Grades for each student in each of the three groups, the Ninth Grade Learning
Community Academy, the Environmental Technology Program, and the traditional high
school group (Random Sample) were collected at each nine-week marking period as was
each student’s attendance record. The grades were then averaged for each group
separately, thereby determining which group performed best academically at each nine
week marking period. The same process was done for attendance. The average of each
marking period’s attendance record determined which group had the highest number of
absences.

The School Climate Survey, provided by the National Association of Secondary
School Principals, was given to students over a three-day period of time. The survey
took each student approximately 30 minutes to complete.

The School Climate Survey was evaluated per group by measure of Standard
Score (SS) and correlated with mean GPA using the Pearson Product correlation
coefficient.
Data Collection and Analysis

Academic success was measured by comparing the grade point averages of all three groups, the LCA students, the ESTP students, and the Random Sample, for the nine week marking periods beginning with the end of the first nine weeks in November of 1999 and ending in January of 2001. This period of time encompasses four nine week marking periods in the ninth grade year and two nine week marking periods in the tenth grade year. A comparison of the means of each marking period was conducted using multiple non-directional paired t-tests. If the probability of the observed statistical value was \( p \leq .05 \), the hypothesis of no difference would be rejected.

Student attendance was measured by the number of student days absent on a 180-day school calendar. Absences were quantified into intervals of 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and a final category of 6 or more. The absences of each group (ESTP, LCA and the random sample) were ranked using the mode as the measure of statistical significance.

Using the NASSP survey research, a questionnaire was developed with six scales (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know). The questionnaire used for this study was taken from the school climate survey published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals titled School Climate Survey. Fifty-five questions relating to teacher-student relationships, security and maintenance, administration, student academic orientation, student behavioral values, guidance, student-peer relationships, parent and community-school relationships, instructional management, and student activities were asked of 222 students. The 222 students were represented as follows: 74 students from the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy housed on the community college campus; 74 students from the
Environmental Science Technology Program housed on the traditional high school campus; and 74 students from the traditional eighth grade to ninth grade program (Random Sample) housed on the main high school campus. The survey was used to determine whether there is a relationship between school climate, attendance, and GPA.

The survey was administered over a three-day period by a lead teacher. SPSS was used to perform the statistical analyses. Analyses for descriptive/cross-sectional design was used. Descriptive statistics tabulated frequency providing a group mean score. Standard scores provided a measure of comparison, both between groups and to the national standard. Analyses for the correlational design was determined through Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the independent variable (alternate school environment) and the dependent variables (attitudes).

Grade point averages and attendance records were researched and recorded from August, 1999 through January, 2001 for the three groups: the 74 students in the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy housed on the community college campus; the 74 students from the Environmental Science Technology Program housed on the traditional high school campus; and the 74 students from the traditional high school program (Random Sample) housed on the main high school campus. The grade point averages and attendance records were collected and recorded in nine week intervals coinciding with the report card periods designated by the School Board of Broward County, Florida.
Chapter Summary

This purpose of this study was to determine which school environment has the most positive impact on eighth graders transitioning into the ninth grade as determined by GPA, attendance, and school climate.

The information gathered in this study may be generalized only to the students on the main campus of Blanche Ely High School and the students of Blanche Ely High School who were located on the campus of Broward Community College during the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years. The sample was limited to 222 students, 74 in the ESTP group, 74 in the random sample, and 74 on the community college campus during the 1999-2000 school year. The second year of the study included only term one of the school year, August, 2000 through January, 2001 and included the same 222 students who were promoted to the tenth grade. Although the students in each group were exposed to different instructors, all teachers in this study held valid teaching certificates and were certified at the secondary level by the State of Florida. The limitation of varied instruction was minimized through standardized curriculum objectives that each instructor followed. The three groups were provided the same opportunities related to special services, including orientation procedures, parent conferences, and tutoring. The selection process and entrance criteria were the same for students who participated in ESTP and for those who participated in the LCA program.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter describes the population and sample being studied, the data collection procedure, the instruments administered and the data analysis used. The problem investigated in this study was to compare three eighth grade to ninth grade transition programs in a selected high school in South Florida, Blanche Ely High School, during the 1999 through 2001 school years. This study investigated whether the educational environment had an impact on student achievement (grade point average, GPA), daily student attendance, and school climate. The three programs investigated for this study were the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy, the Environmental Science Technology Program, and the traditional eighth grade to ninth grade program. This study investigated the impact of returning the ninth grade students from the community college campus to the traditional high school in the tenth grade and (by measuring) its effect on student achievement and attendance.

Specifically, this study determined which educational environment had the greatest impact on student achievement as measured by GPA, student daily attendance, and school climate as determined by the administration of the National Association of Secondary School Principals School Climate Survey (NASSP). These three transitional programs were compared during the 1999-2001 school years.
The purpose of this study was to determine which school environment had the most positive impact on eighth graders transitioning into the ninth grade as determined by GPA, attendance, and school climate. Chapter 4 will show a significant correlation between student achievement (as evidenced by GPA), attendance and school climate, garnering support for the theory that an alternate educational environment may improve high school student achievement throughout a four-year time span. Chapter 4 contains an analysis of the collected data. School environment was the independent variable investigated in this study; specifically, one group of ninth grade students was housed on a college campus, while the other two groups were housed in a traditional high school.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions and corresponding hypotheses. The hypotheses were stated in the null form and were tested at a .05 alpha level:

Question 1: How does the educational environment impact student achievement?

Ho1: There will be no significant individual differences in academic performance between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those ninth grade students educated in a special setting as determined by their weighted grade point averages.

Question 2: How does the educational environment impact student attendance?

Ho2: There will be no significant individual differences in daily class attendance between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school
campus compared to those ninth grade students educated in a special setting as determined by their attendance records.

Question 3: Is academic performance maintained in grade ten when the LCA students return to the traditional high school setting?

Ho3: There will be no significant individual differences in academic performance in the tenth grade between the students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those students educated in a special setting as determined by their weighted grade point average.

Question 4: Is there a relationship between school climate, attendance, and GPA as determined by student responses on the NASSP School Climate Survey?

Ho4: There will be no significant differences in academic performance between the students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those students educated in a special setting as a result of individual attitudes as determined by answers provided on the school climate survey.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to determine which school environment had the most positive impact on eighth graders transitioning into the ninth grade as determined by GPA, attendance, and school climate. Once this is determined, school officials can decide which environment is most beneficial to increasing student achievement, attendance, and school climate at the ninth grade level. The methodology necessary to achieve this purpose is described. The participants involved, the instruments utilized and the procedure selected are explained.
The NASSP School Climate Survey was administered to 222 students involved in this study to determine their opinions on school climate. The 222 students surveyed represented 74 students from the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy housed on the community college campus; 74 students from the Environmental Science Technology Program housed on the traditional high school campus; and 74 students from the traditional high school program housed on the high school campus.

Grades for each student in each of the three groups, the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy, the Environmental Technology Program, and the traditional high school group (Random Sample) were collected at each nine-week marking period, as was each student's attendance record. The grades were then averaged for each group separately, thereby determining which group performed best academically at each nine week marking period. The same process was done for attendance. The average of each marking period's attendance record determined which group had the highest number of absences.

Descriptive Summary of Characteristics

Null hypothesis 1 was analyzed using multiple non-directional t-tests for independent samples and then evaluated at an alpha level of .05. If the probability of the observed statistical value was less than 5 percent (p ≤ .05), the null hypothesis was rejected. Null hypothesis 2 was analyzed by ranking the number of absences per group according to the most frequently occurring number of absences per group (i.e., group mode of absences). Null hypothesis 3 used an unpaired t-test to compare the GPA of LCA students with themselves during the first two semesters of each respective school
year studied. Again, the critical value of alpha was set at .05 and results with a probability of less than .05 required rejection of the null hypothesis. Null hypothesis 4 was analyzed by ranking the subsets relative to standard scores and determining the Pearson Product Correlation coefficient as a measure of correlative strength between GPA and school climate attitudes. Pairwise deletion of missing data was used to normalize groups due to withdrawals, missing GPA scores and missing attendance records; as such, although 74 students per group were included in the preliminary study, only 67 have been included in the final calculations due to natural attrition. Each nine-week marking period constituted one academic semester. This study encompassed the entire 1999-2000 academic year (semesters 1-4 of grade 9) and half of the 2000-2001 academic year (semester 1 and 2 of grade 10).

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used for this study was published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and entitled School Climate Survey (NASSP). Fifty-five questions relating to teacher-student relationships, security and maintenance, administration, student academic orientation, student behavioral values, guidance, student-peer relationships, parents and community-school relationships, instructional management, and student activities were asked of 222 students. The NASSP School Climate Survey is normed for use with students in grades 6-12. Instrument readability is rated at grades 5-6 (NASSP, 1988). The NASSP School Climate Survey collects data about perceptions on 10 subscales. These subscales are listed as follows:
Teacher-Student Relationships: Perceptions about the quality of the interpersonal and professional relationships between teachers and students.

Security and Maintenance: Perceptions about the quality of maintenance and the degree of security people feel at the school.

Administration: Perceptions of the degree to which school administrators are effective in communicating with different role groups and in setting high performance expectations for the teachers and students.

Student Academic Orientation: Perceptions about student attention to task and concern for achievement at school.

Student Behavioral Values: Perceptions about student self-discipline and tolerance for others.

Guidance: Perceptions of the quality of academic and career guidance and personal counseling services available to students.

Student-Peer Relationships: Perceptions about students care and respect for one another and their mutual cooperation.

Parent and Community-School Relationships: Perceptions of the amount and quality of involvement in the school of parents and other community members.

Instructional Management: Perceptions of the efficiency and effectiveness of the teacher classroom organization and use of classroom time.

Student Activities: Perceptions about opportunities for and actual participation of students in school sponsored activities (NASSP, 1988).
Instrument Reliability

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) performed pilot and normative studies. The survey instrument was administered to 14,600 students. The instrument was found to have a high face validity and good psychometric properties. The average internal consistency reliability of the climate subscales was 0.81, with a range from 0.76 to 0.83 (NASSP, 1988). Content validity is the extent to which items on a scale are representative of the domains of interest. Construct validity is concerned with the meaningfulness of a test, whether it really measures the underlying trait or characteristic that gives it meaning. During development of the instrument, emphasis was placed on scale and item conceptualization in order to support strong content and construct validity. The items were field tested and subjected to factor analysis. Review of the instrument through factor analysis supported strong content and construct validity for the school climate survey instrument (NASSP, 1988).

The survey was given to the three groups of ninth grade students over a period of three days. All three groups, LCA, ESTP and the Random Sample students were surveyed on the traditional high school campus during their 10th grade year (2000-01) with the LCA and ESTP students located in a regular classroom and the Random Sample students located in the media center. The length of time needed to complete the survey was left open-ended.

Null Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There will be no significant individual differences in academic performance between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school
campus compared to those ninth grade students educated on the community college
campus as determined by their weighted grade point averages. A statistical analysis
indicated that the hypothesis was rejected based on the following data presented.

Table 1 compares the mean GPA of all three groups, LCA, ESTP, and the Random Sample, for the four semesters during the 1999-2000 school year. Table 2 compares the same three groups during the first half of the 2000-2001 school year. According to the results shown in these tables, the LCA students consistently maintained the highest grade point average.

Table 1

Comparison of LCA vs. Random Sample vs. ESTP Grade Point Averages

6th Grade August 1999 — June 2000

LCA Grade Point Averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average GPA</th>
<th>Semester 1</th>
<th>Semester 2</th>
<th>Semester 3</th>
<th>Semester 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Below 2.0*</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
## Random Sample Grade Point Averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average GPA</th>
<th>Semester 1</th>
<th>Semester 2</th>
<th>Semester 3</th>
<th>Semester 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Below 2.0*</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## ESTP Grade Point Averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average GPA</th>
<th>Semester 1</th>
<th>Semester 2</th>
<th>Semester 3</th>
<th>Semester 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Below 2.0*</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2.0 GPA needed for high school diploma*
### Table 2

**Comparison of LCA vs. Random Sample vs. ESTP Grade Point Averages**

**10th Grade August 2000 — January 2001**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LCA Grade Point Averages</th>
<th>Random Sample Grade Point Averages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average GPA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 1</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Below 2.0*</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
ESTP Grade Point Averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Semester 1</th>
<th>Semester 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average GPA</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Below 2.0*</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2.0 GPA needed for high school diploma

Non-directional t-tests for independent samples were performed at the end of each nine-week marking period encompassed within the study. These tests were used to compare the mean GPAs of 1) the randomly selected students housed on the traditional high school campus against the LCA students, 2) the ESTP students, also on the traditional high school campus, against the LCA students and 3) the ESTP students against the Random Sample. Each group had 67 participants (N) and the df was equal to 132. Table 3 shows the results of each t-test performed during the 1999-2000 school year and Table 4 shows the results obtained for the 2000-2001 school year. The LCA group consistently outperformed both the ESTP group and the Random Sample group (p<.05 for each t-test conducted); thus, null hypothesis 1 was rejected.

As a final confirmation to reject null hypothesis 1, the t-test to compare the mean GPAs of ESTP students against the randomly selected group were compared and showed
that there is no significant difference (p > .05) between these two groups of students both housed on the traditional high school campus.

Table 3

T-test Results for 9th Grade Comparison Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to Random Sample</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LCA 2.65</td>
<td>-2.58</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Random 2.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to Random Sample</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>LCA 2.45</td>
<td>-2.52</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Random 2.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to Random Sample</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>LCA 2.31</td>
<td>-2.08</td>
<td>.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Random 2.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to Random Sample</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>LCA 2.27</td>
<td>-2.09</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Random 2.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to ESTP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LCA 2.65</td>
<td>-2.68</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ESTP 2.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to ESTP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>LCA 2.45</td>
<td>-2.50</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ESTP 2.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to ESTP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>LCA 2.31</td>
<td>-2.08</td>
<td>.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ESTP 2.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to ESTP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>LCA 2.27</td>
<td>-2.09</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ESTP 2.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random compared to ESTP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Random 2.40</td>
<td>-2.70</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ESTP 2.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Random compared to ESTP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Random 2.16, ESTP 2.25</td>
<td>.641</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random compared to ESTP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Random 2.16, ESTP 2.20</td>
<td>-.218</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random compared to ESTP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Random 2.17, ESTP 2.18</td>
<td>-.713</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
T-test Results for 10th Grade Comparison Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to Random Sample</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LCA 2.72, Random 2.26</td>
<td>-2.58</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to Random Sample</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>LCA 2.76, Random 2.36</td>
<td>-2.60</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to ESTP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LCA 2.72, ESTP 2.37</td>
<td>-2.62</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to ESTP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>LCA 2.76, ESTP 2.43</td>
<td>-2.68</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random compared to ESTP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Random 2.26, ESTP 2.37</td>
<td>.985</td>
<td>.330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random compared to ESTP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Random 2.36, ESTP 2.43</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>.337</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Null Hypothesis 2

Ho2: There will be no significant individual differences in daily class attendance between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those ninth grade students educated on the community college campus as determined by their attendance records. Null Hypothesis 2 was rejected based on the comprehensive analysis presented.

For this question, absence score data was quantified into both interval mode and mean. The intervals of 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and a final category of 6 or more were used for interval mode and ranked according to the most frequently occurring number of absences per group, per academic semester. Data representing the mean were calculated by adding the total number of absences in each semester and dividing by the total number of students for each of the three groups (67 students in each group). Table 5 compares LCA with the Random Sample while Table 6 compares LCA with the ESTP students. Both indicate the mode interval per group (with corresponding group percentage per semester) for the ninth grade school year (academic year 1999-2000). Tables 8 and 9 display parallel data for the first half of the tenth grade school year (academic year 2000-2001). During the 1999-2000 school year, the mode interval (75 percent of the time) was 6 or more absences for the Random Sample group. For the ESTP and LCA groups, the mode interval (75 percent of the time) was 0 absences. Table 7 represents the calculated mean for all three groups during the 1999-2000 school year. Table 10 represents the calculated mean for the first half of the 2000-2001 school year. The data support the rejection of the null hypothesis as determined through both interval mode rankings and mean when comparing the LCA students to the Random Sample.
Table 5

Comparison of LCA Attendance vs. Random Sample Attendance

9th Grade, August 1999 — June 2000

LCA Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sem 1</th>
<th>Sem 1</th>
<th>Sem 2</th>
<th>Sem 2</th>
<th>Sem 3</th>
<th>Sem 3</th>
<th>Sem 4</th>
<th>Sem 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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or more

Random Sample Students

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(table continues)
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or more

Total of Students: 67; A = # of absences; B = # of students; C = % of absences
Table 6

Comparison of LCA Attendance vs. ESTP Attendance

9th Grade, August 1999 — June 2000

LCA Students

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or more

ESTP Students

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ESTP Students

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</table>

or more

Total of Students: 67; A = # of absences; B = # of students; C = % of absences
Table 7

Comparison of Mean Attendance Data LCA vs. Random Sample vs. ESTP

9th Grade, August 1999 — June 2000

T-test Results for 9th Grade Comparison Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
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<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
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<td>LCA 2.39</td>
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Table 8

Comparison of LCA Attendance vs. Random Sample Attendance

10th Grade, August 2000 — January 2001

LCA Students

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or more

Random Sample Students

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95
Random Sample Students

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</table>

or more

Total of Students: 67; A = # of absences; B = # of students; C = % of absences
Table 9

Comparison of LCA Attendance vs. ESTP Attendance

10th Grade, August 2000 — January 2001

<table>
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<tr>
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or more

<table>
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97
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</tbody>
</table>

or more

Total of Students: 67; A = # of absences; B = # of students; C = % of absences
Table 10

Comparison of Mean Attendance Data LCA vs. Random Sample vs. ESTP

10th Grade, August 2000 — January 2001

T-test Results for 10th Grade Comparison Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
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<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
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<td>-.219</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA compared to ESTP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>LCA 2.60 ESTP 3.18</td>
<td>-.263</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random compared to ESTP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Random 3.13 ESTP 2.87</td>
<td>.620</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random compared to ESTP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Random 3.21 ESTP 3.18</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Null Hypothesis 3

Ho3: There will be no significant individual differences in academic performance in the tenth grade between the students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those students educated on the community college campus as determined by their weighted grade point average. A statistical analysis of data determined that this hypothesis would be rejected based on the criteria presented.
A non-directional unpaired t-test was used to compare the mean GPAs of the students in the LCA group during the first two semesters of each academic year; that is, the mean GPAs of LCA students obtained during semesters 1 and 2 of LCA students 9th grade year was compared to their own mean GPAs obtained during semesters 1 and 2 of their sophomore year. The alpha level of .05 was chosen for significance. In selecting the first two semesters of each year, transition between school environments occurs in both instances and thus minimizes confounding variables. In comparing the mean GPA obtained during semester 1 of the 9th grade year to that obtained during semester 1 of the 10th grade year, p = .17; thus, null hypothesis 3 cannot be rejected. Results from semester 2 between both years are similar; p = .78 and again, null hypothesis 3 cannot be rejected. These results (p-values and t-values) are summarized in Table 11, which also shows the means between groups.

Table 11
Paired T-test Values for LCA Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester 1 (9th Grade)</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.675</td>
<td>.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 1 (10th Grade)</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 2 (9th Grade)</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 2 (10th Grade)</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*df=66
Null Hypothesis 4

Ho4: There will be no significant differences in academic performance between the students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those students educated on the community college campus as a result of individual attitudes as determined by answers provided on the NASSP School Climate Survey. The analysis of data collected from the ten sub-scales on the School Climate Survey indicated that hypothesis 4 would be rejected.

School climate as used in this study has been pre-determined by the nature of the questions asked on the NASSP survey and divided into question intervals as previously discussed. Standard scores (SS) for each subscale on the NASSP climate were obtained for each group in this study (ESTP, LCA, and the Random Sample). SS relates the subscale attitudes of the groups in this study to the national sample of schools used to obtain the norms for the survey. The national average SS is 50; two-thirds of all schools have standard scores between 40 and 60. Results above 60 are considered to be atypically high and results below 40 are considered atypically low. It is advised by the NASSP that SS below 40 be carefully investigated to identify probable reasons for negative perceptions and to plan realistic interventions that support general improvement. Data obtained for this study was ranked according to SS for each subset.

Null hypothesis 4 was rejected on the basis of the positive linear correlation that exists between school climate subscale scores and academic performance as determined by GPA. In 80 percent of subscale answers, LCA students gave the highest scores out of all three groups; ESTP students scores were grouped second highest in 90 percent of the cases. The Random Sample students scores ranked lowest in 90 percent of the cases.
These results are presented in Table 12. These results, taken together with the GPA data (Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, and 11) ranking LCA students as the consistently highest GPA scoring students, ESTP students as the second highest GPA scoring students and students in the Random Sample as the consistently lowest GPA scoring students, form the basis of rejection of null hypothesis 4. Pearson product correlation coefficients were used to compare the strength of this correlation between the mean GPA and the mean SS; (r = .483, p = .000 for the LCA group; r = .346, p = .019 for the ESTP group; r = .359, p = .075 for the Random Sample). Moreover, LCA students and ESTP students exhibited the least number of missed days per semester (Tables 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10) when compared to the Random Sample, supporting the theory that attendance influences GPA and school climate attitudes.
Table 12

School Climate Survey Responses Group Rankings With Mean Standard Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>LCA</th>
<th>ESTP</th>
<th>Random</th>
<th>Mean Standard Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-student relations</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and maintenance</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student academic orientation</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student behavioral values</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-peer relations</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/community relations</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional management</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student activities</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results above 60 are atypically high; results below 40 are atypically low.
Chapter Summary

Based on the results of testing the hypotheses, it can be concluded that according
to the comparative analysis using the paired t-test, the students housed on the community
college campus (LCA) did experience a significant difference in their GPA scores as
compared to the two other student groups housed on the traditional high school campus
(ESTP and the Random Sample). This difference was evident during both the 9th grade
year (1999-2000) and the first term of the 10th grade year (2000-2001). The ESTP group
out-performed the Random Sample in a similar statistical analysis.

Correspondingly, based on the correlation of data in daily attendance, the students
housed on the community college campus showed a significant difference in their daily
attendance as compared to the Random Sample housed on the traditional high school
campus. In this comparison of data, the ESTP group produced similar results to the LCA
group. However, the Random Sample significantly differed from both the ESTP and the
LCA groups.

Furthermore, there was a significant difference in the individual attitudes of the
LCA students compared to the ESTP students and the Random Sample students as
determined by answers provided on the NASSP School Climate Survey when correlating
the data on the ten sub-scales. The results indicate that the ESTP group answered the
questions on the ten sub-scales similarly to the LCA group. The Random Sample's
answers showed a significant difference from both the ESTP and the LCA group. This
finding suggests that being placed in a specific program where students feel a sense of
belonging influences the students in the LCA group and in the ESTP group. Based on
this analysis of data, the survey supports the conclusion that there is a direct relationship between student attitudes and grade point averages (GPA).

This study held the following implications: a) That individual academic performance, as evidenced by GPA, differs between students housed on the traditional high school campus from students educated on the community college campus; b) that class attendance differs between students educated on the community college campus from those students educated in the traditional high school setting; c) that academic performance of LCA students does not differ significantly when students are transitioned from the college campus to the traditional main campus of the high school; and d) that a linear correlative relationship exists between GPA and school climate attitudes.
CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Statement of the Problem

The problem investigated in this study compared three 8th grade to 9th grade transition programs in a selected high school, Blanche Ely High School, located in South Florida, during the 1999 through 2001 school years. This study investigated whether the educational environment had an impact on student achievement, daily student attendance, and school climate. The three programs investigated were the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy (LCA), the Environmental Science Technology Program (ESTP), and the traditional eighth grade to ninth grade program (Random Sample).

The research was based on the dependent factor that during the 1999-2000 school year, one group of ninth grade students (LCA) was housed on a community college campus, while the second group (ESTP) and the third group (the Random Sample) were housed on the traditional high school campus two miles from the college campus. This study investigated the impact of returning the ninth grade students from the community college campus to the traditional high school in the tenth grade and its effect on student achievement and attendance.

The Random Sample traditional high school group was used to determine if being in a special group, such as LCA or ESTP, had any significant impact on the results of the data collected in this study.
Specifically, this study determined which educational environment had the greatest impact on student achievement as measured by grade point average (GPA), student daily attendance, and school climate as determined by the administration of the National Association of Secondary School Principals School Climate Survey (NASSP).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine which school environment had the most positive impact on eighth graders transitioning into the ninth grade as determined by GPA, attendance, and school climate. Once determined, school officials can decide which environment is most beneficial to increasing student achievement, attendance, and school climate at the ninth grade level.

This study will show a significant correlation between student achievement (as evidenced by GPA), attendance and school climate, garnering support for the theory that an alternate educational environment may improve high school student achievement throughout a four year time span.

Research Hypothesis

This study was guided by the following research questions and corresponding hypothesis. The hypotheses were stated in the null form and were tested at a .05 alpha level:

Question 1: How does the educational environment impact student achievement?

H01: There will be no significant individual differences in academic performance between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school
campus compared to those ninth grade students educated in a special setting as determined by their weighted grade point averages.

Question 2: How does the educational environment impact student attendance?

Ho2: There will be no significant individual differences in daily class attendance between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those ninth grade students educated in a special setting as determined by their attendance records.

Question 3: Is academic performance maintained in grade ten when the LCA students return to the traditional high school setting?

Ho3: There will be no significant individual differences in academic performance in the tenth grade between the students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those students educated in a special setting as determined by their weighted grade point average.

Question 4: Is there a relationship between school climate, attendance, and GPA as determined by student responses on the NASSP School Climate Survey?

Ho4: There will be no significant differences in academic performance between the students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those students educated in a special setting as a result of individual attitudes as determined by answers provided on the school climate survey.

W. B. Brookover and L. W. Lezotte found a relationship between various school climate factors and student achievement. School climate factors included: high expectations, academic time allocation, accountability, satisfied teachers, parent interest, limited use of special programs, and principal leadership. They reported that school
climate accounts for a significant amount of variance in student achievement, with race and socio-economic status controlled (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979).

A study was conducted in 1992 by C. R. Bulach, et al. relating school climate to student achievement. The study concluded that schools with higher levels of parent/community involvement and who are led by principals who value the personal approach to education may enhance their students' achievement by promoting a positive school climate (Bulach, 1992).

The findings contained in the Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher (2000), revealed that the transition between primary and secondary school was a critical time for students, parents and teachers (Markow, 2000). Family involvement has been linked to advancing academic achievement. Assisting students with their assignments, and showing a sincere interest in their activities while providing emotional support has been attributed to advancing academic achievement (Coleman & Hoffer, 1990).

In Philadelphia, a program called Gear-Up introduces eighth grade students from John Paul Jones Middle School to Temple University through a tutoring and visitation initiative. University students tutor the eighth grade students in their middle school classroom in an effort to build confidence and establish trust between the two. Then the middle school students visit the university campus and are introduced to the academic environment and student college life. The intent is to generate interest in attending college by developing a relationship with college students and by allowing the middle school students to become familiar with the university campus early in their school experience. The core focus of this program is to increase the academic rigor beginning in the sixth grade and stimulate interest by raising aspirations (Gehring, 2000).
The major difference between the Ninth grade Learning Community Academy (LCA) and the Gear Up program is that students in the LCA program are housed exclusively on the college campus, while the eighth graders in Philadelphia only visit Temple University college classrooms. The Gear Up program focuses on raising the standard of academic expectation at the eighth grade level. The program promotes a relationship with Temple University by allowing eighth grade students to see college students at work in their university classrooms. University students also tutor and mentor the eighth graders encouraging them to meet the demands of high school. Gear Up advances the rigor of the eighth grade core subjects to better prepare students to meet the challenges of academic life at the university (Gehring, 2000).

The Gear Up program is not as concentrated or intense an experience as the LCA program where students study daily on the college campus in college classrooms. The LCA program promotes ninth grade academic advancement while providing students the opportunity to identify with the college environment on a daily basis. The course work at LCA is rigorous and demanding. Students are expected to maintain a 3.0 grade point average to be eligible for dual enrollment college classes. Eligible students may begin dual enrollment classes in the summer after tenth grade. This early exposure to actual college classes with college professors gives LCA students the opportunity to transition from high school academics to university standards.

Schools are more than institutions of academic learning. They are complex social systems where relationships between peers, teachers, administrators, and staff play a vital role in the overall academic process. A sense of community reigns. At schools that are socially healthy, students feel a sense of belonging. They forge friendships with their
peers and maintain respectful relationships with adults (ASCD, 1999). According to the results of the NASSP survey, the LCA students felt a stronger bond between each other than did the other two groups. However, since the ESTP group responded second highest on the survey in that subscale category, it should be noted that belonging to a special group is reported to be an important aspect of the entire high school experience.

Chapter 4 contained an analysis of the collected data. School environment was the independent variable investigated in this study; specifically, one group of ninth grade students was housed on a college campus, while the other two groups were housed in a traditional high school.

H01: There will be no significant individual differences in academic performance between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those ninth grade students educated on the community college campus as determined by their weighted grade point averages.

Null hypothesis 1 was analyzed using multiple non-directional t-tests for independent samples and then evaluated at an alpha level of .05. If the probability of the observed statistical value was less than 5 percent (p≤.05), the null hypothesis was rejected. A statistical analysis indicated that the hypothesis was rejected based on the data presented.

H02: There will be no significant individual differences in daily class attendance between the ninth grade students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those ninth grade students educated on the community college campus as determined by their attendance records.
Null hypothesis 2 was analyzed by ranking the number of absences per group according to the most frequently occurring number of absences per group (i.e., group mode of absences). Null Hypothesis 2 was rejected based on the comprehensive analysis of data presented.

**Ho3:** There will be no significant individual differences in academic performance in the tenth grade between the students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those students educated on the community college campus as determined by their weighted grade point average.

Null hypothesis 3 used a paired t-test to compare LCA student academic achievement during the first two semesters of each respective school year studied. Again, the critical value of alpha was set at .05 and results with a probability of less than .05 required rejection of the null hypothesis. A statistical analysis of data determined that this hypothesis would be rejected based on the criteria examined.

**Ho4:** There will be no significant differences in academic performance between the students educated on the traditional high school campus compared to those students educated on the community college campus as a result of individual attitudes as determined by answers provided on the NASSP School Climate Survey.

Null hypothesis 4 was analyzed by ranking the subsets in the NASSP School Climate Survey relative to standard scores and determining the Pearson Product Correlation coefficient as a measure of correlative strength between GPA and school climate attitudes. The analysis of data collected from the ten sub-scales on the School Climate Survey indicated that hypothesis 4 would be rejected.
Although 74 students per group were included in the preliminary study, only 67 have been included in the final calculations due to natural attrition. Each nine-week marking constituted one academic semester. This study encompassed the entire 1999-2000 academic year (semesters 1 to 4 of grade 9) and half of the 2000-2001 academic year (semester 1 and 2 of grade 10).

This research holds the following implications: a) That individual academic performance, as evidenced by GPA, differs between students housed on the traditional high school campus from students educated on the community college campus; b) that class attendance differs between students educated on the community college campus from those students educated in the traditional high school (specifically LCA compared to the Random Sample); c) that being placed in a specific program, such as LCA or ESTP, where students feel a sense of belonging influences attendance, GPA, and attitudes; d) that academic performance of LCA students does not differ significantly when students are transitioned from the college campus to the traditional main campus of the high school; and e) that a linear correlative relationship exists between GPA and school climate attitudes as evidenced by the answers given by both the LCA and ESTP students.

Conclusions

Based on the statistical analysis presented in this study, the following conclusions can be made:

1. Students respond differently to different educational environments.
2. Belonging to a specific group of students, such as LCA or ESTP positively impacts GPA, daily attendance, and school climate attitudes.
3. The School Board of Broward County, Florida should continue to investigate alternative non-traditional school sites.

4. Pilot programs should be encouraged with School Board support for transportation, lunch programs, curriculum needs, staffing and activities.

5. All three groups should be administered the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test) in both the second and the third year of high school in order to correlate standardized test data to further substantiate the theory that student achievement is increased when ninth grade students are placed in an alternate educational environment.

6. The School Board Department of Research and Evaluation should assist in future data collection and analysis in an effort to provide statistical data that will support the advancement of student achievement at all levels based on alternative educational settings, grade point averages, school climate attitudes, and standardized test scores.

Recommendations for Further Research

On the basis of this study, the following recommendations are made for further research:

1. It is suggested that the first school climate survey be administered at the end of the first year in high school. In this study, the students were not surveyed until their second year when all three groups were housed on the traditional high school campus. This might have compromised the responses since the Learning Community Academy students had transitioned from the community college campus to the main high school campus for their second year in high school. It would have been interesting to see if the responses remained the same had the Learning Community Academy students
responded to the survey while still on the community college campus having never experienced the environment of the main high school campus.

2. This study should be continued by following the progress of the three groups, the Ninth Grade Learning Community Academy, the Environmental Science Technology Program, and the traditional high school program, through their fourth year of high school. The fourth year of high school would allow the study to better conclude if the educational environment did have a significant impact on the results of this study since the Learning Community Academy students would be the only group that would be housed back on the community college campus for the fourth year. This would provide a complete four-year picture of the grade point averages, attendance records, and school climate attitudes.

3. All three groups of students should repeat the school climate survey at the conclusion of the fourth year of high school. This would provide insight into how the students felt about their high school experiences and environments.

4. The results of this study would be validated if a fourth group of students housed on another type of non-traditional campus, such as in a converted shopping center, was added to the study. This would provide statistical data comparing a community college campus, a traditional high school campus, and a non-traditional educational setting such as converted office buildings or shopping center space.

5. This study recommends future research and data collection of other alternate educational settings including the investigation of the correlation of student achievement (GPA), attendance, and school climate attitudes in other geographic areas.
6. It is recommended that a nationally recognized standardized test be administered to all three groups (LCA, ESTP, and the Random Sample) in order to collect data that might support evidence that placing the ninth grade on a community college campus or other unconventional alternate educational setting (i.e.: office buildings and/or shopping centers) would enhance student achievement; therefore suggesting that it is beneficial to replicate this program regardless of geographic location.

7. It is recommended that the teachers involved in future studies participate in the school climate survey. This will provide data that might support evidence that teacher attitudes play a significant role in student achievement, attendance, and student attitudes.
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