

**Comparing Perceptions of Advisors and Students in Relationship to Behaviors
Within a Middle School Advisory Program**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the similarities in students' perceptions and advisors' perceptions of the relationships between advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. The study also explored the extent to which the relationship between advisory program behaviors and school connectedness was affected by an advisor's experience or a student's gender. The sample for this study was students and staff from Spring Garden Middle School in St. Joseph, Missouri, who participated in the Advisory Program Questionnaire during the academic year 2011-12. The variables in this quantitative correlational research study were student-teacher relationships, student engagement, sense of belonging, and school connectedness as measured by the Student Advisory Program Questionnaire and Advisor Program Questionnaire.

Analysis revealed mixed results for the relationships existing between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and perceptions of school connectedness. Results from the study, which involved a survey of 376 students and thirty-two advisors, indicated a positive relationship exists between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and perceptions of school connectedness for both students and advisors. In contrast, advisors' years of experience, and student gender had limited effect on the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. School administration can use the results of this study to focus professional development efforts toward developing an advisory program that meets the developmental needs of students. Recommendations for further research include expanding the study to include other schools' advisory program data as well as examining student achievement in relation to advisory program behaviors and school connectedness.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the students and staff of Spring Garden Middle School with whom I currently work, those from the past, as well as those in the future. It has been my privilege and blessing to learn most of what I know about teaching and learning from you. The song lyrics to *My Wish* by Rascal Flatts (2006) delineate my heartfelt wish for my students.

Is that this life becomes all that you want it to
Your dreams stay big, your worries stay small
You never need to carry more than you can hold
And while you're out there gettin' where you're gettin' to
I hope you know somebody loves you
And wants the same things too
Yeah, this is my wish

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Did you ever know that you're my hero,
And everything I would like to be?
I can fly higher than an eagle
'cause you are the wind beneath my wings.

I must thank my supportive family and friends. I have been blessed with very special people who have all continued to make a difference in my life. A special thank you to my sisters and their families, my stepmother, and my mother-in-law; your support was appreciated and meant the world to me as I pursued this journey. Thank you to my dear friend, April Wyatt. Your encouragement always came at just the right time. Thanks for pushing me to the end! To Corey Vorthmann and Sandy Steggall, thank you for the many laughs, heart to heart conversations, and most important the depth to which our friendship grew while making the trek to Overland Park.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Having at least one caring adult at school can make a difference in whether a middle school student succeeds or fails. Young adolescents are at a point in their lives where they need to be provided with a learning environment that is nurturing and supportive, while simultaneously allowing for autonomy. With this in mind, “the heart of a successful advisory program is the development of a trustful, caring community in which students perceive their advisor as demonstrating unconditional support for their growth” (Knowles & Brown, 2000, p.154). According to the 2011 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), a child who enters school in good health, feels safe, and is connected to school, is ready to learn. Each year millions of adolescents make the transition from elementary to middle school, moving from a self-contained elementary setting with typically one teacher, to a schedule that is comprised of several different class periods with a number of different teachers. Therefore, there is a possibility that middle level students do not have as strong connection to their teachers as students have with elementary teachers. Students who have at least one adult in school who understands their social and emotional development are more likely to stay in school (McCloskey, 2007).

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2006) stated:

Student advisory programs provide an opportunity for middle level schools to introduce an adult advocate into the life of every student in the school. Many young adolescents suffer from feelings of isolation and loneliness, and advisory

activities allow them to connect with caring adults and other students to help them through the rough spots during the middle level years (p. 273).

One opportunity for a student to connect with a caring adult would be an advisory program, which has been a recommendation from school reform experts for numerous years. According to the 1989 Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, all students should be able to rely on an adult to help them learn from their experiences, understand physical changes and relationships with their family and peers, and to act on behalf of the student to be a resource that is needed for the student to succeed. Thus, the Center for Social and Emotional Education (2012) believes that students who have a strong connection and a belief that adults care about them are more likely to avoid behaviors that prevent them from being successful. Advisory programs can have a significant impact on individual students as well as the whole school climate.

National legislation has impacted school reform efforts throughout the United States, resulting in pressure for improvements in standardized achievement scores. The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has driven many school personnel to ignore the social and emotional needs of the whole child due to time or budgetary constraints, instead emphasizing cognitive or academic success of students (Center on Education Policy, 2008). The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) stated that there was a volatile mismatch between the organization and curriculum of middle schools and the intellectual and emotional needs of young adolescents. Unfortunately, the NCLB initiative narrowed the focus to strictly reading, writing, and math with limited emphasis on science, social studies, and elective courses. In some cases, electives and exploratory classes became insignificant or even nonexistent in the curriculum (National Middle

School Association, 2005). According to a national middle school study conducted by McEwin and Greene (2010) there is a significant gap in recommended middle level components and implementation due to standardized testing pressures, opposition from traditionalists, and economic factors that are impacting developmentally responsive practices. These recommended middle level components include teaming, block scheduling, exploratory programs, transition programs, and advisory programs. School advisory programs are being eliminated, and the additional minutes created from this elimination are added to the minutes scheduled for core classes such as mathematics and communication arts, in hopes of increasing standardized achievement scores. Blum (2005a) stated, "In this era of accountability and standards, school connectedness can seem like a soft approach to school improvement. It can, however, have a substantial impact on the measures of student achievement for which schools are currently being held accountable" (p.16). Researcher Foote (2007) stated that as schools focus narrowly on test results, the other aspects of the school are marginalized, including the time for developing strong bonds between the students and the adults.

In order to prepare children for the 21st century, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) (2007), proposed a call for the whole child initiative, promoting the development of children who are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. According to Scherer (2007), this is a way of stopping the waste of too much talent and the loss of connection for many students. Advisory programs are important for middle level learners, because they address the social, emotional, and academic needs of the students (Osofsky, Sinner & Wolk, 2003). While

these components are crucial at all educational levels, they are particularly needed for young adolescents.

Statement of the Problem

Though advisory programs are frequently proposed in middle-level reform, there has been limited research on the effectiveness of advisory programs, due to limited practice within schools. According to Stevenson (2001), teacher advisory is an excellent idea in the middle-level, although it is often the most inadequately implemented program. Advisory programs remain one of the most difficult of the middle grade programmatic components to implement (Fenwick, 1992; Lounsbury & Clark, 1990; National Middle School Association, 2006). Blum's (2005a) research supports that non-academic aspects of school are significant contributors to both school and student success. Creating trusting relationships and ensuring that every student feels close to at least one adult at school are strategies that support school connectedness. Unfortunately, people believe that the focus for school should be acquisition of knowledge with less focus on development of the whole child. Wilcox and Angelis's (2007) study of several New York State Schools identified students' social and emotional well being as a key finding in what makes a middle school work. It was revealed that higher-performing schools recognize that if a school creates a sense of security for middle school students, this provides them with a support network and connection to their school. The findings within the New York State School study indicated diverse communities as well as those with high poverty or violence can be a challenge, but creating a welcoming environment where students can feel safe and successful is imperative (Wilcox & Angelis, 2007).

According to the National Middle School Association (NMSA), there is an expanding amount of literature on advisory programs, although few researchers have systematically studied the subjective experiences of students and teachers within advisory programs (2006). Advisory programs continue to be recommended, although they have been a challenge to implement and sustain (Anfara, 2006). The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2006) stated that a comprehensive advisory or other program that ensures that each student has frequent and meaningful opportunities to meet with an adult to plan and assess the student's academic, personal, and social development is number four on the NASSP recommendation list. According to Sardo-Brown and Shetlar (1994), "more investigations of both teacher and student perceptions of the advisor-advisee period need to be done in a variety of different types of schools" (p.23). Previous studies of advisory programs are qualitative in nature and the goals are difficult to measure. This study attempted to address the need for better information on advisory program behaviors that enhance school connectedness for students.

Background of Study

This study was conducted at a mid-size urban middle school, Spring Garden Middle School, located in Northwest Missouri. Spring Garden Middle School (SGMS) is one of four middle schools in the St. Joseph School District. During the 2011-2012 school year there were 410 students enrolled. The student population was comprised of 85% white students, 7% black students, and 7% representing other ethnicity. The teaching staff for 2011-2012 school year was thirty-four full-time teachers. The composition of the staff was made up of 97% white and 3% black, with 79% female and

21% male. The average number of years of experience as an advisor at Spring Garden Middle School was three years (Pearson School System, 2011).

The Spring Garden Advisory Program was implemented in 2008-2009 with twenty of the 2011-2012 staff members. The SGMS model was developed by an internal collaborative group of staff members who identified what the focus would be for the SGMS students and advisors. Throughout this collaborative process, the identified areas were building relationships and monitoring academic progress. The advisory program, a yearlong once a week program for all students, facilitates a relationship among students, parents, and teachers while providing academic support and personal development. At SGMS, the advisory groups met from 11:32 a.m. to 12:32 p.m., the first day of each week. During this time, the advisor and advisees eat lunch together. The average advisory group had twelve to thirteen students. The advisory groups included both seventh and eighth grade students. The advisors provide personal and academic support to students, and all advisors developed their own plans for their advisement groups. The advisory program provides each student with an adult advocate who supports the whole child with school connectedness as the ultimate goal (Spring Garden Middle School, 2011).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to conduct a comparison of students' and advisors' perceptions about advisory program behaviors in relationship to school connectedness. A second purpose was to explore the difference in perceptions of beginning and experienced advisors. Third, the study looked at a comparison of perceptions in relationship to gender. Thus, this study examined whether advisory programs are critical

components that influence student-teacher relationships, school engagement, and a student's sense of belonging, ultimately impacting school connectedness.

Significance of the Study

This study of urban middle school students and teachers examined the importance of relationships, school engagement, and sense of belonging as significant for school connectedness within the current advisory program structure for SGMS students.

Secondly, the study provides survey data that will be an indicator for further professional development needs and identify additional support for advisors. The information should be useful in assisting other schools in developing effective advisory programs and providing knowledge about what students and advisors perceive as behaviors that impact school connectedness.

Delimitations

Delimitations are referred to as “self-imposed boundaries set by the researchers on the purpose and scope of the study” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 134). The study was delimited to the Spring Garden Middle School Advisory Program in the St. Joseph School District. This study was delimited to student and advisor perceptions about the advisory program. The results of this study might be difficult to generalize to all advisory programs from previous research. There are many different advisory structures, advisory program curriculums, and professional development for advisors and advisory programs. Although there are numerous case studies about advisory programs, this research will be relevant and applicable to the current Spring Garden Middle School Advisory Program structure. Therefore, a single-site study was selected.

Assumptions

Assumptions are referred to as the “postulates, premises, and propositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 135).

The assumptions made for the study included that responses received from all the respondents reflected their honest perceptions. Perceptions of students who were attending Spring Garden Middle School for the 2011-2012 school year and staff who were serving as advisors for the 2011-2012 school year were assumed valid measures of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. An additional assumption was that students’ data entry into Google Documents was completed correctly.

Research Questions

Creswell (2009) stated research questions (RQ) “shape and specifically focus the purpose of the study” (p. 132). The following research questions were addressed:

RQ 1: To what extent is there a relationship between students’ perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness for students?

RQ 2: What is the relationship between advisors’ perceptions of the advisory program behaviors and school connectedness?

RQ 3: To what extent is there a difference in the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness between students and advisors?

RQ 4: To what extent is there a difference in the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness between beginning advisors and experienced advisors?

RQ 5: To what extent is there a difference in the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness between male and female students?

Definition of Key Terms

According to Creswell (2009), terms that “individuals outside the field of study may not understand and that go beyond common language” should be defined (p. 39). The following terms are defined to assist avoiding confusion and adding coherence to the study. For purposes of this study, the following definitions will be used:

Advisee. An advisee is a student at the middle school level who interacts with an advisor (Brown & Anfara, 2001).

Advisor. An advisor is an adult advocate who supports the students’ academic and personal development (Burkhardt, 1999).

Advisory Program. Refers to an arrangement within a school setting whereby one adult and a small group of students have an opportunity to interact on a scheduled basis in order to provide a caring environment for academic guidance and support, everyday administrative details, recognition, and activities to promote citizenship (Burkhardt, 1999).

Engagement. Refers to participation in school activities and the student’s identification with school and acceptance of school values (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Middle School. For the purposes of this study, middle school will mean those schools which embrace the middle school philosophy as described by the National Middle School Association through the *This We Believe* (2005) publication and the *Breaking Ranks in the Middle* (2006) publication.

School Connectedness. School connectedness refers to a school culture in which students have meaningful relationships with adults within the school, are engaged in the school, and have a sense of belonging to the school. (Blum & Libbey, 2004b; Klem & Connell, 2004; McNeely, & Falci, 2004).

School Connection. School connection is the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals (Johnson Foundation at Wingspread, 2004).

Overview of Methodology

The current study employed a survey research design. The population was composed of 410 students and 32 advisors from Spring Garden Middle School during the spring semester of 2011-2012. The sample was comprised of 376 students and 32 advisors from the 2011-2012 academic school year. The two instruments utilized in the study to measure student and advisor perceptions were the Student Questionnaire with Coded Domains and The Advisor Questionnaire (Shulkind, 2007). The 36-item student questionnaire and the 39-item advisor questionnaire asked students to rate their perception on advisement behavior descriptors on a Likert scale. In addition to the survey of advisory program behavior perceptions, a third instrument was used to measure school connectedness for students and a fourth instrument was used to measure school connectedness as perceived by advisors. The student questionnaire included seven questions, in relation to school connectedness, were also utilized in the study (Blum, 2004b). The advisor questionnaire included four questions, in relation to school connectedness, that were utilized in the study (Shulkind, 2007). Demographic data were collected for both students and advisors. The demographic data collected for students

was gender and number of years with current advisor. Advisor demographic data collected was gender and years of experience as an advisor. In order to determine students' and advisors' perceptions of advisement program behaviors that impact student connectedness a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between each pair of variables. Furthermore, the correlation coefficients were compared using Fisher's Z test to test for differences between advisors and students, between beginning and experienced advisors, and between male and female students.

Organization of the Study

This clinical research study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one includes the introduction, background of the study, significance of the study, statement problem, purpose, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, definitions of key terms, and overview of methodology. Chapter two provides a comprehensive examination of relevant literature to the study. Chapter three discusses the topics of research design, population sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and statistical analysis as related to this study. Chapter four contains all data collected and results, based on the statistical analysis conducted in the study. Finally, chapter five concludes the study with an interpretation of the results and recommendations for further study.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the availability of an advisory program and school connectedness for students, as measured by student and advisor perceptions. The study supports advisory programs as critical components that will influence student-teacher relationships, school engagement, and a student's sense of belonging, ultimately impacting student achievement. The study also examined whether advisors' years of experience had any influence on perceptions about characteristics of an advisory program that affect school connectedness for students. School connectedness is an essential component that impacts a student's academic achievement. It is a concept that refers to a school culture in which students have meaningful relationships with adults, are engaged academically, emotionally, and socially, as well as feeling like they belong to the school. It is especially crucial as young adolescents transition from elementary to middle school. Middle level advocates have continued to explore ways in which educators can provide a developmentally responsive middle school to meet the needs of these adolescents. This study sought to build upon this body of research through the lens of both the students and advisors.

The following review of literature represents the literature pertinent to the research study, namely, student advisory programs, meaningful relationships with an adult, engagement in school, sense of belonging, and school connectedness. Specifically, chapter two is organized into five distinct sections: (a) advisory programs, (b) student – teacher relationships, (c) engagement in school, (d) sense of belonging, and (e) school connectedness.

Advisory Programs

An advisory is an arrangement in which an adult and a small group of students interact on a scheduled basis in order to provide a caring environment for academic guidance and support, everyday administrative details, student recognition, and promotions of citizenship (NMSA, 1996). “The primary goal of advisory programs is usually to create tighter relationships between adults and students to foster more supportive school climate overall” (McClure, Yonezawa & Jones, 2010, p. 5). Since the beginning of the middle school movement, advisory programs have been one of the recommended components to provide a developmentally responsive school (Galassi, Gullledge, & Cox, 1998; George & Alexander, 2003). Advisory programs emerged as part of the middle school reform movement in the mid-1980s to address the unusual social and emotional stresses that adolescents face as well as the benefits from a closer child-adult relationship. According to Goodwin (2003), advisory groups can provide the necessary support needed during this developmental stage of middle school students. The core of the support within an advisory group is the one-on-one relationship between students and the advisor. “Teachers have the opportunity to build caring relationships with students and gain valuable knowledge of students to better meet individual needs” (Caskey, 2008, p.4). Caswell (2003) found that advisory periods lend themselves to having a significant impact on student adjustment and student achievement. Students are able to gain a sense of control and the capacity to communicate their thoughts and feelings.

Although for the past two decades advisory programs have been viewed by many as essential for middle level students, some believe advisory programs are a waste of time and resources (McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010). The rationale for advisory programs is to:

- Promote small, caring communities of learners.
- Promote mutually respectful and meaningful relationships.
- Promote individual attention to students.
- Provide each student with an opportunity to “belong.”
- Allow teachers to be actively involved in the affective development of students.
- Emphasize the social and emotional development of every young adolescent.
- Assist students with interpersonal communication and skill development (NMSA, 2006).

According to McEwin and Greene (2010), there is a steady increase in the number of advisory programs, but almost half of all middle level schools have no formal advisory program. More importantly, little is known about the overall quality and effectiveness of the current programs. Much of what occurs in publications are narrative accounts that attest to advisory’s positive impact or explain how to implement advisory programs (Gewertz, 2007). According to Makkonen (2004), the Coalition of Essential Schools’ research examined ways in which advisory can contribute to a positive school climate including:

- Improved relationships between students and teachers (Espe, 1993; Totten & Nelson, 1994)
- An increased sense of trust and belonging (Ziegler & Mulhall, 1994)
- Better communication among all member so the school community (Simmons & Kiarich, 1989)
- A strong atmosphere of equality (Putbrese, 1989)
- Reduced student smoking and alcohol use (Putbrese, 1989)

Researchers Clark and Clark (1994) stated that the most frequently mentioned purposes of advisories include the promotion of opportunities for social development, assisting students with academic problems, facilitating positive involvement between teachers, students, and administrators, providing an adult advocate for each student in the school, and promoting a positive school climate. In contrast, several researchers have identified various structures and advisory program intentions, but there is little research that supports the social-emotional and cognitive benefits of advisory programs (McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010).

Styron and Nyman's (2008) research supported the value of advisory programs through their examination of key characteristics of middle school performance. This study gleaned information about middle level organizational practices, school climate, and instructional practices, with advisory programs a component of the organizational practices. The data within this study implied that low-performing middle schools scored slightly higher in the area of organizational structures and instructional practices compared to high-performing middle schools. Additional researchers also found that organizational structures, including interdisciplinary teams, common planning times, and

advisory periods have a positive impact on student achievement (Caswell, 2003; Danielson, 2002; Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 1999; George & Oldaker, 1985).

Student – Teacher Relationships

The relationship between a student and teacher can have a permanent impact on the development of not only a student's academic success but also his personal development. Researcher Goodwin (2003) indicates that schools with advisory periods promote caring relationships between teachers and students. A student-teacher relationship is fundamental to the healthy development of all students in school (Carrier as cited in Myers & Pianta, 2008). According to Carrier, (as cited in Stipek and Miles, 2008) relationships between students and the teacher can affect students' behavior, academic performance, and sense of belonging. Researcher Foote (2007) stated that an advisory program has the potential to support positive youth development when it influences the students' developmental environment. This can occur through the direct interaction between students and teachers. Young adolescents derive much of their academic motivation from their sense of the supportiveness of others within the school environment. In other words, students will achieve at a higher level if they feel their teacher is interested and supportive (Goodenow, 1993a). Factors that affect student-teacher relationships include; race, socio-economic status, gender, temperament, and type of relationship the child had with their primary caregiver (Hill et al., as cited in Hughes & Kwok, 2007).

Supporting the critical role of teacher-student relationships and interactions, the research study in *Personalization & Caring Relationships with Adults in Urban High Schools* concludes that personalization is creating a positive and caring relationship

between students and adults responsible for teaching and mentoring. If students are tied emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally to their education, they are less likely to show signs of alienation and more likely to be engaged. McClure, Yonezawa, and Jones (2011) examined longitudinal data, over a three-year period, from 14 high schools within an urban California setting. The researchers' analysis revealed that there is a consistent pattern between student attitudes about personalization and advisory were significantly related to academic achievement. However, students who reported high levels of personalization or connectedness had significantly higher academic success. In contrast, students who felt better about advisory, the lower their academic success was. According to the researchers, this indicates that relationships matter more when they are informal, improvised, and authentic encounters between teachers and students than when they originate in a formally designated structure such as advisory. Ultimately, "policies are needed to encourage and strengthen more positive school climates based on closer, more caring relationships and mentoring that develop more naturally over time with an eye toward improving academic achievement" (McClure, Yonezawa, & Makeba, 2011, p. 1).

Additional researchers have studied the effects of different school environments at the middle level, due to declines in students' motivation, competency beliefs, and their general self-esteem when they transition to middle school. Eccles, Lord and Midgley (1991) have concluded that the decline is linked to specific classroom characteristics, in particular, the decline in the quality of the student-teacher relationships as well as the opportunities for participation in classroom decision-making, and in the increase in classroom ability grouping. A study conducted in 1994 with 7th graders found that students' self-esteem declined when transitioning to junior high school. Their findings

revealed that the decline occurs because the transition disrupts the early adolescents' social networks at a time when social activities are becoming increasingly important (Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). According to the National Middle School Association (1999), advisory programs attempt to promote self-esteem for each student through recognition and providing time in small groups with a caring adult.

Teachers as Advisors: Fostering Active Citizens in Schools (2005) publication supports the research that student-teacher relationships can impact the "whole child" (Barker, Basile, & Olsen, 2005). Researchers Henderson and Milstein (2003) indicate that pro-social bonding increases positive connections among youth, their peers, and other adults. These connections build resilient skills that are critical to student success. The Jefferson County School District in Colorado uses a holistic approach to support the whole child initiative. Their model is used for all grade levels to address their students' intellectual, social, and personal needs. Advisory is one strategy this particular school uses to support their holistic approach. It allows teachers to build the one-to-one bond between the teacher and advisees. Also, the students learn skills for problem solving, communication and negotiating conflict (Barker, Basile, & Olson, 2005).

Another study by Buchanan and Bowen (2008) examined the influence of adult and peer support on the psychological well being of middle school students. According to the researchers, a stronger understanding of how different relationships influence the psychological well being of middle school students, has a positive impact on the ability of school social workers, educators, and parents to help students achieve academic success. The findings within this study indicated that there is a significant interaction effect between peer and adult support related to adolescents' psychological well-being.

The data supported the theory that those with a high psychological well-being score had a strong combination of both adult and peer support. In addition to this research, other studies have revealed that students with a higher level of emotional functioning earned higher grades were academically motivated and had a greater school connection (Maddox & Prinz 2003; Roeser & Eccles 1998; Roeser et al. 1998 as cited in Buchanan & Bowen, 2008).

Davis (2006) examined the relationship quality between students and teachers. The researcher examined the theoretical perspectives on teacher-student relationship through the motivation, attachment, and sociocultural perspectives. Simply stated, what are the beliefs, motivation, and knowledge students have when interacting with teachers. Davis (2006) furthered her study with additional researchers by exploring how teachers' understandings of closeness as well as their understanding of risk in relationship to decision-making in regards to the use of touch in relation to student-teacher relationships. An Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS), (Aron, Aron, and Smollan, 1992) instrument was used in this study to explore the closeness in intimate, familial, and friend relationships. This tool allowed the researchers to measure how close one person feels to another person, such as in the student-teacher relationship. The researchers' work revealed that students' relationships with teachers are a hybrid of other relationships they have had with adults in the past. The student-teacher relationship, while somewhat reflective of parent-relationships, is unique and grounded in part by the composition of the class and the content area (Davis, 2006).

School Engagement

Student engagement is primarily and historically about increasing achievement, positive behaviors, and a sense of belonging in all students, with a primary focus on students in middle or high school due to disengagement becoming a concern during these years (Willms, Friesen, & Milton, 2009). The High School Survey of Student Engagement conducted by Yazzie-Mintz (2007), as stated in McCloskey (2007), indicated that two out of three students indicated they were bored at least once a day. According to Klem and Connell (2004), “40% to 60% of students become chronically disengaged from school” (p. 262). In addition, 68% of middle school students are more likely to be disengaged with low levels of teacher support (Klem & Connell, 2004). Why is student engagement so critical? Researchers have found that student engagement is a predictor of student achievement and behavior in school, regardless of a student’s socioeconomic status. In contrast, those with low school engagement have a greater risk of long term adverse consequences such as disruptive behaviors, absenteeism, and dropping out of school (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Trowler (2010) defined engagement as “student engagement is concerned with the interaction between the time, effort, and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimize the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance and reputation of the institution (p. 3).” Researchers Parson and Taylor (2011) found that engagement is hard to define due to the different types of engagement such as academic, cognitive, intellectual, institutional, emotional, behavioral, social, and psychological. Research conducted by Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Parils (2004) used only three types of

engagement, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive to study student engagement.

Behavioral engagement would indicate that the student complies with behavioral norms such as attendance and the absence of negative behavior. Emotional engagement would depict a student who has affective response, such as interest, enjoyment, and a sense of belonging. Those who are cognitively engaged are invested in their learning (Trowler, 2010). According to the research conducted by Parsons and Taylor (2011), Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, and Lehr (2004) divided engagement into behavioral, academic, cognitive, and psychological while researcher Dunleavy (2008) included behavioral, academic-cognitive, and social-psychological. Behavioral includes value of schooling outcomes, participation, and attendance. Academic-cognitive encompasses time-on-task, completion of homework, effort toward learning, and cognition and strategic learning. The social-psychological component included a sense of belonging, relationships, motivation, interest, and autonomy.

There is ample literature on student engagement, although what constitutes student engagement according to researchers has varied. According to Parsons and Taylor (2011), most measures have focused on quantitative data about behaviors such as attendance, test scores, and truancy. The measures are looking at levels of achievement versus levels of student engagement in learning, which would include interest, time on task, and enjoyment of learning. However, Parson and Taylor (2011) state that researchers are starting to ask students and teachers how they would measure school engagement. From this study, qualitative data has been collected resulting in students' perspective to teachers' perspective having differing definitions of engagement in learning.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) conducted annual surveys with public and private institutions that included five facets that measured engagement scales. Included within this survey were academic challenge, active learning, students and staff interactions, enriching educational experiences, and supportive learning environment. According to Coates (2009), student engagement is when students are involved with activities and conditions that are likely to generate high-quality learning. Coates modified the survey to include an additional facet, which included work-integrated learning from the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE).

Sense of Belonging

“A sense of belonging to school may be more important to life satisfaction than previously thought” (O’Brien, 2010, p. 28). Current research suggests that school bonding during adolescence is a predictor of positive psychological functioning, including life satisfaction (O’Connor, 2010; O’Connor et al., 2009). Anderman (2003) reported that school belonging refers to students’ perception of being accepted and respected in their school settings. Due to the amount of time adolescents spend in educational settings and the social importance attached to school-related activities, students’ sense of belonging is particularly important to their development and health. Another study by Goodenow (1993b), defined students’ sense of belonging as the sense of psychological membership in the school or classroom, the extent to which students feel accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school environment. The concept of belongingness is a broad one, defined in many ways, such as relatedness, sense of community, sense of classroom membership, support and identification (Osterman, 2000).

Other researchers, Beck and Malley (2003) expressed that traditional sources of belonging have been impacted by the rapidly changing demographics of the United States. The breakdown of nuclear and extended families, an increase in the number of hours parents are away from the home working, and the increase in geographic mobilization have left children with a sense of feeling disconnected to not only home, but school as well. Even with the technological advances, there is a sense of alienation and apathy among youth that is unprecedented. “Schools can increase the sense of belonging for all students by emphasizing the importance of the teacher-student relationship and by actively involving all students in the life of the classroom and the school community” (Beck & Malley, 2003, p.1).

Research in relationship to a student’s sense of belonging has been consistently connected with positive academics and affective variables. Sense of belonging at the school level has been more closely tied to school-related motivation, self-reported effort, and reduced absenteeism. The research is not as clear or prevalent for a student’s sense of belonging in relationship to student achievement. Although, many researchers believe that students’ sense of belonging and academic achievement may be reciprocally related over time, with each positive outcome being reinforcement for the other area (Anderman & Freeman, 2004). A sense of belonging has been a major need for years. According to Capps (2004), his research supports Maslow’s (1962) hierarchy of needs, humans have a desire to belong to groups. People need to feel loved as well as accepted by others. According to Maslow (1962), until the need is satisfied, no true learning will occur. Until schools are able to establish a sense of belonging, the maximization of the learning potential of students will be a struggle.

Another study by Capps (2004) examined the relationship between students' sense of belonging and the teachers' perception of the students' sense of belonging. Within this study, the data analyses revealed that teachers believe students have a greater sense of belonging than they actually do. The data analysis also indicated that the academic achievement of the middle schools studied does not have a relationship to the students' sense of belonging. Within this study, the schools that were lower performing academically revealed a larger discrepancy between the teachers' perception and the students' perception of students having a sense of belonging. Capps (2004) inferred that teachers in lower performing schools may have less understanding of how students feel about their school than do teachers in high-performing schools. Additional variables within the study that had some implications were for minority students and students with low-socioeconomic backgrounds. The data revealed that students of minority descent, attending a low performing school have a lower sense of belonging. In addition, schools with low-income students who attend low-performing schools will tend to have lower sense of belonging than low-income students who attend high performing school.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2000) studied student engagement across several countries. The study examined students' sense of belonging and participation at school, two of the most important measures of student engagement according to PISA. Within this analysis, the researchers provide estimates of the prevalence of students who have a low sense of belonging, assessment of the strength of the relationship between engagement and academic performance, as well as an examination of engagement with gender, family structure, and socio-economic status. The key findings within this study indicate that about 25% of all students were

considered to have a low sense of belonging with about 20% consistently absent from school. The important component is that 75% of all students have a moderate or strong sense of belonging at school, even though they are from low socio-economic families or have weak literacy skills. Another key finding is the wide range among schools that have a prevalence of students considered to have low sense of belonging and participation, indicating that family background of students can only be partially attributed to sense of belonging. There are aspects of school policy and practices that contribute to the success of schools in enhancing a sense of belonging or participation. Additional findings within this study reveal that the dominant risk factors for student disengagement is low socio-economic status, single-parent family, and being foreign born. In addition, females were as likely to have a low sense of belonging as males, but would not be as regularly absent from school as their male counterpart (Willms, 2003).

Stevens (2009) conducted a study to investigate whether middle school students' perceptions of teacher interactions and home-school dissonance are predictors of school attachment. The examination of variables included ethnicity, gender, and grade level. The study participants were sixth through eighth grade students in two middle schools. The students completed three questionnaires: Questionnaire of Teacher Interactions, Cultural Discontinuity Between Home and School Scale, and the School Attachment Questionnaire. Results indicated those students' perceptions of teacher interactions and home-school dissonance significantly predicted school attachment or school belongingness.

School Connectedness

According to Goodenow (1993a), School connectedness can also be referred to as school engagement, school bonding, and school attachment (Libbey, 2004). School connectedness is argued to be extremely important for adolescents as they rely less on family and more on relationships found in schools with friends and others (Goodenow, 1993b). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) defined school connectedness as the belief held by students that the adults and peers in their school care about their learning as well as them as individuals. School connectedness would be described as students feeling positive about education, feeling as if they belong in the school environment, and having positive relationships with school staff and students. According to the CDC, students that feel connected are more likely to have a number of positive health and academic outcomes. Numerous studies indicate strong positive correlation between school connectedness and academic motivation and adjustment.

According to Osterman's (2000) review of belonging in schools, links were found between students' sense of belonging and self-esteem, internal regulation, attitudes toward school, motivation, and achievement. Within the work of Shochet, Dadds, Ham, and Montague (2006), the following study supports the impact that school connectedness can enhance both positive and health outcomes of the student. Israelashvili (1997) study of school membership or connectedness was a positive prediction for future success. Israelashvili concluded that students' perception of being accepted and respected by their peers and by school staff are important determinants of their expectations of the future. Maddox and Prinz (2003) stated that school bonding is connected with self-esteem and self-efficacy, as well as academic performance. Mulvey and Cauffman (2001) found that

having an attachment to school, described as a sense of belonging to the school and belief in the fairness of school rules and discipline, were more effective in reducing school violence than strict discipline policies.

Blum (2005b) stated, “Increasing the number of students connected to school is likely to improve critical accountability measures” (p.1). According to Blum (2005b), there is strong scientific evidence that demonstrates increased student connection to school decreases absenteeism, fighting, bullying, and vandalism while promoting education motivation, engagement, academic success, attendance, and completion rates. A National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health conducted by McNeely along with Nonnemaker and Blum (2002) examined why some adolescents feel connected to school while others do not. The study explored ways in which schools can enhance school connectedness. McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum (2005), stated “adolescents are not likely to feel connected to school if they are in a school that does not meet their developmental needs” (p.138). When core developmental needs are met through a student’s social environment, school connectedness will be maximized. Developmental needs identified for middle and high school students include autonomy opportunities to demonstrate competence, caring and support from adults, supervision that is developmentally appropriate, and acceptance from peers. Blum (2005b) stated, “students who perceive their teachers and school administrators as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear and fair are more likely to be connected to school” (p.3).

Stracuzzi and Mills’ (2010) key finding within their study of rural youth in relationship to school connectedness and positive youth development identified that

students who feel more connected to their schools are more likely to do well in school and report having higher self-esteem, fewer feelings of depression, substance use is decreased, and fewer aggressive behaviors. An additional key finding was that feeling disconnected from their schools appears to affect males in a different capacity than females. Males are more likely to experience aggressive behavior or substance abuse, while females will experience depression. Whitlock (2003) stated “youth at school who feel good, perceive meaningful attachment to adults, and possess a sense of belonging are also more likely to feel engaged, to work harder, and to be involved with positive activities in and outside of school time” (p.1). According to Whitlock (2003), the variation in school connectedness level across studies may reflect differences in how connectedness has been defined, but overall, the consistency gleans two factors that appear to predict school connectedness: age as the primary factor and gender to a lesser extent. Thus, the research has supported the link between school connectedness in relationship to student-adult relationships, school engagement, and a sense of belonging for all students. “Although connecting students to school is important at all grade levels, it’s especially crucial during the adolescent years” (Blum, 2005a, p.16).

Summary

In summary, the literature shows that advisory programs can impact school connectedness, resulting in the ability to address the developmental needs of young adolescents. This overview of the literature related to advisory programs began with an overview of advisory programs and research-based benefits and purpose of advisory programs. Next, effective advisory program components, student-teacher relationships, school engagement, and sense of belonging were explored in order to provide

background information when analyzing the perceptions of those involved with the advisory program.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of the relationship between advisors' and students' perceptions about advisory program behaviors that enhance school connectedness, thus supporting student-teacher relationships. An additional purpose was to determine to what extent there is a difference in the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and perceptions of school connectedness between students and advisors. Chapter three of this study includes the design of the research study; an explanation of the population, sample, and sampling procedures; and the instrumentation used in the research. Additionally, the data collection procedures are discussed, validity and reliability are explained, and limitations for the study are presented.

Research Design

In order to address the research questions regarding student and advisor perceptions about characteristics that enhance school connectedness, a correlational research design was utilized in this quantitative study to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between two numerical variables, advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. The correlational design was appropriate to this study because the relationships were analyzed between numerical measurements. The numerical independent variables in this study included the student and advisor perceptions for school engagement, sense of belonging, student-teacher relationships, and school connectedness as the dependent variable. The independent variables were measured through the Student Advisory Program Questionnaire (Appendix A), the

Advisory Questionnaire (Appendix B), the Student School Connectedness (Appendix C), and the Advisor School Connectedness (Appendix D). The questionnaires allowed the researcher to gather perceptual data to indicate what advisory program behaviors, advisory classmates' behaviors, and advisor behaviors, if any, enhance school connectedness because of relationships, engagement, and sense of belonging. In addition, the data allowed the researcher to examine the difference in the relationship between advisory program behaviors and school connectedness from the perceptions of a beginning advisor with an experienced advisor as well as perception by gender for students.

Population and Sample

The population for this research included all students enrolled during the Spring semester of the 2011-12 academic school year at Spring Garden Middle School and advisors employed at Spring Garden Middle School during this time period. From this population, the research utilized a single-stage purposive sampling procedure. This would include 410 students, thirty-four teaching staff, and three para-professionals, with a total of thirty-seven instructional staff. Thirty-two staff members served as advisors for the 2011-2012 school year.

Sampling Procedures

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) stated that purposive sampling is a type of nonrandom sampling used when the researcher has experience and knowledge of the independent and dependent variables that drive the sample selection. The research utilized a single-stage purposive sampling procedure. In this study, the sample was selected based on students and staff who were enrolled and taught during the 2011-2012 school year at SGMS. A

total of 376 students (age range from 12-15) and thirty-two advisors were included in the sample.

Instrumentation

The four instruments utilized in the study were the Student Advisory Program Questionnaire with Coded Domains, the Advisor Questionnaire with Coded Domains, and School Connectedness Questionnaires for students and advisors. The Student Advisory and Advisor questionnaires were developed by researchers Foote and Shulkind (2007). Permission was granted from Foote (2007) and Shulkind (2007) to utilize the instruments in the study (D. Foote, personal communication, October 31, 2011). These questionnaires were administered at Spring Garden Middle School during April and May of 2012. Approximately 25 to 30 minutes was needed for students and advisors to complete the questionnaires.

The Student Advisory Program Questionnaire with Coded Domains was used to measure student perceptions on advisory program behaviors (Shulkind, 2007, p.202). The advisor questionnaire included thirty-six items forming three coded domains: Engagement, Sense of Belonging, and Meaningful Relationships were rated on the intensity of the student perception on each domain. The scale ranges from 1 (never) to 4 (often). The Engagement domain, consisting of thirteen items, describes feelings of being an active participant in school activities and academically. The Sense of Belonging domain, which consists of fourteen items, describes feelings of trust and connection to others. The Meaningful Relationship domain, consisting of nine items, describes feelings of having a positive relationship with an advisor. An additional question collected demographic information, gender, for use in additional analysis. The 36 indicators that

were addressed on the Student Advisory Program Questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

The Advisor Questionnaire with Coded Domains was used to measure advisor perceptions on advisory program behaviors (Shulkind, 2007, p. 202). The advisor questionnaire included thirty-nine items forming three coded domains: Engagement, Sense of Belonging, and Meaningful Relationships were rated on the intensity of the advisor perception on each domain. The intensity scale ranges from 1 (never) to 4 (often). The Engagement domain, consisting of fifteen items, describes feelings of being an active participant in my advisees' school activities and academically. The Sense of Belonging domain consists of thirteen items, describing feelings of trust and connection within an advisory group. The Meaningful Relationship domain, consisting of eleven items, describes feelings of having a positive relationship with an advisee. An additional question collected demographic information, years of advisory experience, for use in additional analysis. The 39 indicators that were addressed on the Advisor Questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

The student school connectedness items were used to measure student perceptions on whether a student feels connected to school (Blum, 2005b). The student questionnaire included seven items. These seven items specifically addressed areas of engagement, belonging and relationships. The intensity scale ranges from 1 (never) to 4 (often). The seven indicators that were addressed on the School Connectedness can be found in Appendix C.

The advisor school connectedness items were used to measure advisor perceptions on what advisors perceived as being indicators for school connectedness for

students (Shulkind, 2007). The advisor school connectedness questions included four items. These four items specifically addressed areas of engagement, belonging and relationships. The scale ranges from 1 (never) to 4 (often). The four indicators that were addressed on the Advisor School Connectedness can be found in Appendix D.

Measurement.

The Student Advisory Questionnaire, the Advisor Questionnaire, the Student School Connectedness Questionnaire, and the Advisor School Connectedness Question is appropriate for use with this specific population as it provides a measure of student and advisor perceptions for advisory program behaviors and school connectedness (Foote & Shulkind, 2007; Blum, 2005b). Survey participants make responses to individual questions on a Likert-type scale to indicate their perception of the frequency of advisory program behaviors and their perception of what constitutes school connectedness. The Likert-type scale rating is follows: *often, sometimes, rarely, and never*. These responses were then assigned a numerical value of one through four, respectively. A collective measure was computed for the survey items, specifically addressing the three domains representing meaningful student-teacher relationships, engagement in school, and sense of belonging. These domains were based on what defines student connectedness employed within the research of Shulkind and Foote (2007), in addition to the work of other researchers (Blum & Libbey, 2004b; Klem & Connell, 2004; McNeely, & Falci, 2004). Next, collective measures were computed for the responses to the group of survey items that specifically addressed school connectedness for students and school connectedness for advisors.

Validity and reliability.

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) defined validity as “the degree to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure” (p. 181). There are three main kinds of validity: content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity (Lunenburg and Irby, 2008). The questionnaire instruments were developed through the use of several national instruments. These instruments included the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) the United States Department of Education’s National Educational Longitudinal Study 1988 (NELS:88), the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), and the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire and Scales Developmental Assets Model 1990 (MSLQ). According to Shulkind, these national instruments have yielded valid and reliable results in previous established studies. The NSSE provided student engagement and measures based on frequencies. Shulkind selected NELS:88 questionnaire because of a previous study completed by Finn and Rock (1997), researchers in the area of student engagement. The measures included in this study were student preparedness, student adherence to rules and directions, and student timeliness. MSLQ was drawn upon because it was developed based on a social-cognitive perspective on student motivation and learning. Specific measures on the MSLQ that were used in the student questionnaire development were peer learning, help seeking, and task value. Scales developmental assets model measures thriving indicators that support school success is a result of positive relationships between students and the adults in the schools (Shulkind, 2007). In addition to Shulkind’s work, the researcher drew upon the research work of Blum when crafting the student connectedness questionnaire portion. Blum (2005b) identified seven qualities that influence students’ positive attachment to

school. The 1994 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) instrument was utilized when identifying school connectedness indicators (Blum, 2005b).

Reliability refers to “the degree to which an instrument consistently measures whatever it is measuring” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 182). One way of reporting the internal reliability of a survey or questionnaire is to use the Cronbach’s alpha (Cronbach, 1951). The internal reliability of a survey refers to the relationship between the response to each item on the survey and the overall response or score for the instrument itself (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). According to Santos (1999), alpha coefficient ranges in value from 0 to 1, which may be used to describe the reliability of multi-point formatted questionnaire or scales. “The higher the score, the more reliable the generated scale is” (Santos, 1999, p.2). The type of reliability that the Student Advisory Questionnaire, Advisor Questionnaire, Student School Connectedness, and Advisor School Connectedness employ is internal consistency reliability through Cronbach’s alpha coefficients. The Cronbach’s alpha value for the subscales contained within the Advisor Questionnaire included, Student-Teacher Relationships (.48), Engagement (.79), Sense of Belonging (.86), and School Connectedness (.53). According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), a Cronbach’s alpha value of .80 is acceptable for instruments containing 40 items. Within the Advisor Questionnaires, the subscales included: Student-Teacher Relationships with 11 items, Engagement with 15 items, Sense of Belonging with 13 items and School Connectedness with four items. If instruments contain subscales, internal consistency coefficients should be calculated. “Instruments containing fewer items and subscales will typically have smaller reliability coefficients (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p.183). So, these lower coefficients would be expected.

Data Collection Procedures

A Proposal for Research (see Appendix E) was submitted on December 20, 2012 to the Baker University Institutional Review Board (IRB) requesting an exempt review due to the use of non-personally identifiable archival data. On January 30, 2013 the IRB granted approval for the study in accordance with Baker University's requirements and policies for conducting research under the exempt category (see Appendix E).

All data included in the sample were obtained from archival data accessed from Spring Garden Middle School. Student data collection occurred in May of 2012. The researcher accessed the archival data for the 2011-2012 academic school year from a Google document that included the data from the Student Questionnaire. In addition, the researcher also accessed the Google document to gather data for student gender.

Advisor data collection occurred in April of 2012. The researcher accessed the archival data for the 2011-2012 academic school year from a Google document that included the data from the Advisor Questionnaire. In addition, the researcher also accessed the Google document to gather data for advisors' years of experience. The researcher was able to download the data into an Excel spreadsheet to view responses to individual questions within the questionnaires revealing the intensity score for each question.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

This study used quantitative methods of data collection and data analysis. The quantitative data collected for Spring Garden Middle School in the study included student and advisor perceptions for school connectedness and advisory program behaviors, which

included belongingness, engagement, and relationships. Additional calculations included years of experience for advisors and student gender.

In this study, the variables for SGMS were the perceptions of the students and advisors for advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, r , was calculated to analyze each of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient ranges in value between -1 and +1. Coefficient values between -1 and 0 indicate a negative relationship, meaning the two variables have little connection. Coefficient values between 0 and +1 indicate a positive relationship, meaning that the variables have a connection or positive correlation. The closer the correlation coefficient value falls to +1 or -1, the stronger the linear relationship between the variables. A coefficient value of +1 is indicative of a perfect positive relationship while a value of -1 indicates a perfect negative relationship and a value of 0 indicates no relationship at all (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The correlation coefficient was tested for statistical significance. Fisher's z transformation test was utilized to assess the significance of the difference between two correlation coefficients found in two independent samples.

The first research question for this study is the following: To what extent is there a relationship between students' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness for students? In order to address this research question, the following research hypothesis was tested:

Research Hypothesis 1. A relationship exists between students' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness for students.

This research question was addressed by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to index the strength and direction of the relationship between students' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and students' perceptions for school connectedness. The coefficient was calculated between the responses for each domain within the Student Advisory Program Questionnaire and the responses to the combined questions from the School Connectedness Questionnaire. The correlation coefficient was analyzed in order to determine the strength of the relationship between students' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. Statistical significance for the correlation was set at $\alpha = .05$.

The second research question for this study is the following: To what extent is there a relationship between advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness? In order to address this research question, the following research hypothesis was tested:

Research Hypothesis 2. A relationship exists between advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness.

This research question was addressed by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to index the strength and direction of the relationship between advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and advisors' perceptions for school connectedness. The coefficient was calculated between the responses for each domain within the Advisor Program Questionnaire and the responses to the combined questions from the School Connectedness Questionnaire. The correlation coefficient was analyzed in order to determine the strength of the relationship between advisors' perceptions of

advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. Statistical significance for the correlation was set at $\alpha = .05$.

The third research question for this study is the following: To what extent is there a difference in the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness between students and advisors? In order to address this research question, the following research hypotheses were tested:

Research Hypothesis 3. A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student-teacher relationships and school connectedness between students and advisors.

Research Hypothesis 4. A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student engagement and school connectedness between students and advisors.

Research Hypothesis 5. A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of sense of belonging and school connectedness between students and advisors.

This research question was addressed by calculating Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients to index the strength and direction of the relationship between students' and advisors' perceptions of student-teacher relationships, student engagement, sense of belonging, and school connectedness. To determine whether a difference was statistically significant within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness existed, as measured by students' and advisors' perceptions of student-teacher relationships, school engagement, and a sense of belonging, hypotheses tests were conducted. The differences between each pair of correlations were tested using Fisher's z

test to compare the differences in perceptions of students and advisors in relationship to advisory program behaviors. The critical value for the z test was set at 1.96 ($\alpha = .05$). Fisher's z test can be utilized to assess the significance of the difference between two correlation coefficients found in two independent samples.

The fourth research question for this study is the following: To what extent is there a difference in the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness between beginning advisors and experienced advisors? In order to address this research question, the following research hypotheses were tested:

Research Hypothesis 6. A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student-teacher relationships and school connectedness between beginning advisors and experienced advisors.

Research Hypothesis 7. A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student engagement and school connectedness between beginning advisors and experienced advisors.

Research Hypothesis 8. A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of sense of belonging and school connectedness between beginning advisors and experienced advisors.

This research question was addressed by calculating Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients to index the strength and direction of the relationship between beginning advisors' and experienced advisors' perceptions of student-teacher relationships, student engagement, sense of belonging, and school connectedness. To determine whether a difference was statistically significant within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness existed, as measured by beginning and experienced

advisors' perceptions of student-teacher relationships, school engagement, and a sense of belonging, hypotheses tests were conducted. The differences between each pair of correlations were tested using Fisher's z test to compare the differences in perceptions of beginning and experienced advisors in relationship to advisory program behaviors. The critical value for the z test was set at 1.96 ($\alpha = .05$). Fisher's z test can be utilized to assess the significance of the difference between two correlation coefficients found in two independent samples.

The fifth research question for this study is the following: To what extent is there a difference in the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness between male and female students? In order to address this research question, the following research hypotheses were tested:

Research Hypothesis 9. A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student-teacher relationships and school connectedness between male and female students.

Research Hypothesis 10. A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student engagement and school connectedness between male and female students.

Research Hypothesis 11. A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of sense of belonging and school connectedness between male and female students.

This research question was addressed by calculating Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients to index the strength and direction of the relationship between male students' and female students' perceptions of student-teacher relationships, student

engagement, sense of belonging, and school connectedness. To determine whether a difference was statistically significant within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness existed, as measured by male and female students' perceptions of student-teacher relationships, school engagement, and a sense of belonging, hypotheses tests were conducted. The differences between each pair of correlations were tested using Fisher's z test to compare the differences in perceptions of male and female students in relationship to advisory program behaviors. The critical value for the z test was set at 1.96 ($\alpha = .05$). Fisher's z test can be utilized to assess the significance of the difference between two correlation coefficients found in two independent samples.

Limitations

The limitations of a study are "factors that may have an effect on the interpretation of the findings or on the generalizability of the results" (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 133). There were several limitations to this study. The greatest limitation is that the use of one measurement tool may be an incomplete representation of effective advisory programs. Another limitation is in the researcher, who was also the principal, administering the questionnaire to the students. Subjects might have felt compelled to answer the items in a certain manner due to the presence of the Principal. Also, the instruction, activities, and environment during advisement may have been inconsistent among advisors included in the study. The researcher implemented protocols to limit this concern as much as possible. Furthermore, the insight might not be applicable to all middle level advisory programs.

Summary

This study was a quantitative analysis using a correlational research design to determine the relationship between students' and advisors' perceptions about advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. In addition, the correlational design was used to determine the difference in the relationship between advisory program behaviors and school connectedness in relation to advisors' years of experience and student gender. A purposive sample was taken from the population of SGMS students and advisors for the academic years of 2011-12. The Student Questionnaire with Coded Domains and the Advisor Questionnaire with Coded Domains were used to collect data regarding students' and advisors' perceptions of the extent to which advisory program behaviors enhance school connectedness. Pearson product correlation coefficients were calculated in order to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between each pair of variables. In addition, Fisher's Z transformation test was used to measure the difference between the independent variable correlations. Chapter four presents the results of the data analysis.

Chapter Four

Results

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between students' and advisors' perceptions about advisory program behaviors in relation to school connectedness. The study also examined the difference in perceptions of students and advisors, the difference in the perceptions of beginning and experienced advisors, and the difference in perceptions of male and female students about advisory programs. The population for this study included all students enrolled during the spring semester of the 2011-12 academic school year at Spring Garden Middle School and advisors employed at Spring Garden Middle School during this time period. In previous chapters, the background of the study was clarified, relevant literature was reviewed, methodology was identified, and research questions and hypotheses were stated. In this chapter, the results of quantitative analysis are presented for each of the study's research questions. The following section includes descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing, and contains results from Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient calculations to examine the relationships between the independent variables and school connectedness. In addition, this section contains results from hypothesis test using Fisher's Z to test for the differences in correlations between students and advisors, between beginning and experienced advisors, and between male and female students.

Descriptive Statistics

The Student Advisory Program Questionnaire, Advisory Questionnaire, Student School Connectedness Questionnaire and Advisor School Connectedness Questions were used as a measure of students' and advisors' perceptions about advisory program

behaviors that enhance school connectedness. Three domains were addressed within advisory program behaviors: meaningful student-teacher relationships, engagement in school, and sense of belonging. Students' and advisors' perceptions were categorized into a Likert-type scale with four intensity levels: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, and Often. The Likert-type scale rating is follows: *often* = 4, *sometimes* = 3, *rarely* = 2, and *never* = 1. The mean for each scale may range between one and four. For the collective score of each domain, a mean closer to one indicates low levels of frequency for the domain while a mean closer to four indicates high levels of frequency for that domain. For the purpose of this study, beginning advisors were defined as three years or less, while experienced advisors had at least four years of advisement experience. Table 1 includes descriptive statistics for the advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors in relationship to years of experience.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Advisors' Perceptions Based on Years of Experience

Domain	Beginning			Experienced		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Connectedness	3.25	.42	11	3.31	.53	18
Relationships	3.29	.24	10	3.43	.23	20
Engagement	2.98	.42	9	3.16	.35	20
Belonging	2.97	.43	11	3.12	.49	20

Of the 32 advisors included in the study's sample, both beginning and experienced advisors' mean scores for each domain mirrored one another with student-teacher

relationship domain having the highest average, followed by school engagement, and sense of belonging domain with the lowest average for both beginning and experienced advisors. Below, Table 2 includes the mean, standard deviation, and sample size for students' perceptions as measured by the Student Advisory Program Questionnaire based on gender.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Students' Perceptions Based on Gender

Domain	Male			Female		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Connectedness	3.36	.65	187	3.41	.51	173
Relationships	3.23	.66	191	3.37	.61	166
Engagement	3.40	.51	184	3.46	.43	168
Belonging	3.00	.65	187	3.01	.59	165

Of the 365 students included in the study's sample, both male and female students' mean scores were the greatest for student engagement. The averages for all domains fell within an intensity level that depicts "sometimes" for both male and female. Results of hypothesis testing are presented in the next section of this chapter.

Hypothesis Testing

RQ1. To what extent is there a relationship between students' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness for students? In order to address this research question, the following research hypothesis was tested:

Research Hypothesis 1: A relationship exists between students' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness for students.

This research question was addressed by calculating Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients to index the strength and direction of the relationship between students' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and students' perceptions of school connectedness. The coefficient was calculated between the responses for each domain within the Student Advisory Program Questionnaire and the means of the responses to the combined questions from the School Connectedness Questionnaire. Each correlation coefficient was analyzed in order to determine the strength of the relationship between students' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and their own school connectedness. The results of the calculation of the correlations are reported in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Correlations between Students' Perceptions of Advisory Programs and Students' Perceptions of School Connectedness

Domain	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>
Relationships	.473	360	.000
Engagement	.655	342	.000
Belonging	.486	339	.000

The calculated correlation between students' perception of advisory program behaviors and their own school connectedness was found to be .473 for the relationship domain, .655 for engagement, and .486 for the domain of belonging. Because the p-value for each correlation was less than .05, there is sufficient evidence to support the research hypothesis; thus, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between the

perceptions of the advisory program behaviors and the perceptions of school connectedness for students.

RQ2. To what extent is there a relationship between advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness? In order to address this research question, the following research hypothesis was tested:

Research Hypothesis 2: A relationship exists between advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness.

This research question was addressed by calculating Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients to index the strength and direction of the relationship between advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and advisors' perceptions for school connectedness. The correlation coefficient was calculated between the responses for each domain with the Advisory Program Questionnaire and the means of the responses to the combined questions identified for school connectedness. The correlation coefficient was analyzed in order to determine the strength of the relationship between advisors' perception of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. The results of the calculation of the correlations are reported in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Correlations Between Advisors' Perceptions of Advisory Programs and Advisors' Perceptions of School Connectedness

Domain	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>
Relationships	.612	28	.000
Engagement	.635	27	.000
Belonging	.791	29	.000

The calculated correlation between students' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness for students was found to be .612 for the relationship domain, .635 for engagement, and .791 for the domain of belonging. Because the p-value for each correlation was less than .05, there is sufficient evidence to support the research hypothesis; thus, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between the perceptions of the advisory program behaviors and the perceptions of school connectedness for students.

RQ3. To what extent is there a difference in the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness between students and advisors? In order to address this research question, the following three research hypotheses were tested:

Research Hypothesis 3: A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student-teacher relationships and school connectedness between students and advisors.

This hypothesis was tested by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to index the strength and direction of the relationship between students' perceptions of student-teacher relationships and students' perceptions of school connectedness, resulting in a calculated correlation of $r = .473$. A second correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between advisors' perceptions of student-teacher relationships and advisors' perceptions of school connectedness, with a calculated correlation of $r = .612$. In order to test whether a difference existed between the correlation for students and the correlation for advisors, a Fisher's z test was utilized. Using Fisher's formula to calculate z , the standardized

difference for student-teacher relationship domain within advisory program behaviors between the two correlations was found to be ($z = -0.68$). To determine whether the difference was statistically significant, a hypothesis test was conducted with critical value z set at 1.96. The calculated correlation between the two variables was not different for students and advisors because the z value was contained in the interval $-1.96 < z < 1.96$. There is not sufficient evidence to support the research hypothesis; thus, the correlation between perceptions of student-teacher relationships within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness is not different for students and advisors at Spring Garden Middle School.

Research Hypothesis 4: A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student engagement and school connectedness between students and advisors.

This hypothesis was tested by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to index the strength and direction of the relationship between students' perceptions of student engagement and students' perceptions of school connectedness, resulting in a calculated correlation of $r = .655$. A second correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between advisors' perceptions of student engagement and advisors' perceptions of school connectedness, with a calculated correlation of $r = .635$. In order to test whether a difference existed between the correlation for students and the correlation for advisors, a Fisher's z test was utilized. Using Fisher's formula to calculate z , the standardized difference for student engagement domain within advisory program behaviors was found to be ($z = 0.95$). To determine whether the difference was statistically significant, a hypothesis test was

conducted with critical value z set at 1.96. The calculated correlation between the two variables was not different for students and advisors, because the z value was contained in the interval $-1.96 < z < 1.96$. There is not sufficient evidence to support the research hypothesis; thus, the correlation between perceptions of student engagement within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness is not different for students and advisors at Spring Garden Middle School.

Research Hypothesis 5: A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of sense of belonging and school connectedness between students and advisors.

This hypothesis was tested by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to index the strength and direction of the relationship between students' perceptions of sense of belonging and students' perceptions of school connectedness, resulting in a calculated correlation of $r = .486$. A second correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between advisors' perceptions of sense of belonging and advisors' perceptions of school connectedness, with a calculated correlation of $r = .791$. In order to test whether a difference existed between the correlation for students and advisors, a Fisher's z test was utilized. Using Fisher's formula to calculate z , the standardized difference for sense of belonging domain within advisory program behaviors was found to be ($z = -1.49$). To determine whether the difference was statistically significant, a hypothesis test was conducted with critical value z set at 1.96. The calculated correlation between the two variables was not different for students and advisors, because the z value was contained in the interval $-1.96 < z < 1.96$. There is not sufficient evidence to support the research hypothesis;

thus, the correlation between perceptions of sense of belonging within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness is not different for students and advisors at Spring Garden Middle School.

RQ4. To what extent is there a difference in the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness between beginning advisors and experienced advisors? In order to address this research question, the following three research hypotheses were tested:

Research Hypothesis 6: A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student-teacher relationships and school connectedness between beginning advisors and experienced advisors.

This hypothesis was tested by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to index the strength and direction of the relationship between beginning advisors' perceptions of student-teacher relationships and beginning advisors' perceptions of school connectedness, resulting in a calculated correlation of $r = .877$. A second correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between experienced advisors' perceptions of student-teacher relationships and experienced advisors' perceptions for school connectedness, with a calculated correlation of $r = .513$. In order to test if a difference existed between the correlation for beginning advisors and the correlation for experienced advisors, a Fisher's z test was utilized. Using Fisher's formula to calculate z , the standardized difference for student-teacher relationship domain within advisory program behaviors was found to be ($z = 0.756$). To determine whether the difference was statistically significant, a hypothesis test was conducted with critical value z set at 1.96. The calculated correlation between

the two variables was not different for beginning and experienced advisors, because the z value was contained in the interval $-1.96 < z < 1.96$. There is not sufficient evidence to support the research hypothesis; thus, the correlation between perceptions of student-teacher relationships within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness is not different for beginning advisors and experienced advisors at Spring Garden Middle School.

Research Hypothesis 7: A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student engagement and school connectedness between beginning advisors and experienced advisors.

This hypothesis was tested by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to index the strength and direction of the relationship between beginning advisors' perceptions of student engagement and beginning advisors' perceptions for school connectedness, resulting in a calculated correlation of $r = .736$. A second correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between experienced advisors' perceptions of student engagement and experienced advisors' perceptions for school connectedness, with a calculated correlation of $r = .601$. In order to test if a difference existed between the correlation for beginning advisors and the correlation for experienced advisors, a Fisher's z test was utilized. Using Fisher's formula to calculate z , the standardized difference for student engagement relationship domain within advisory program behaviors was found to be ($z = 0.279$). To determine whether the difference was statistically significant, a hypothesis test was conducted with critical value z set at 1.96. The calculated correlation between the two variables was not different for beginning advisor and experienced advisors, because the z

value was contained in the interval $-1.96 < z < 1.96$. There is not sufficient evidence to support the research hypothesis; thus, the correlation between perceptions of student engagement within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness is not different for beginning advisors and experienced advisors at Spring Garden Middle School.

Research Hypothesis 8: A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of sense of belonging and school connectedness between beginning advisors and experienced advisors.

This hypothesis was tested by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to index the strength and direction of the relationship between beginning advisors' perceptions of sense of belonging within advisory program behaviors and beginning advisors' perceptions for school connectedness, resulting in a calculated correlation of $r = .794$. A second correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between experienced advisors' perceptions of sense of belonging and experienced advisors' perceptions for school connectedness, with a calculated correlation of $r = .791$. In order to test whether a difference existed between the correlation for beginning advisors and the correlation for experienced advisors, a Fisher's z test was utilized. Using Fisher's formula to calculate z , the standardized difference for sense of belonging domain within advisory program behaviors was found to be ($z = 0.007$). To determine whether the difference was statistically significant, a hypothesis test was conducted with critical value z set at 1.96. The calculated correlation between the two variables was not different for beginning advisors and experienced advisors, because the z value was contained in the interval $-1.96 < z < 1.96$. There is not sufficient evidence to support the research hypothesis; thus, the correlation between

perceptions of sense of belonging within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness is not different for beginning advisors and experienced advisors at Spring Garden Middle School.

Table 5

Correlations for Beginning and Experienced Advisors' Perceptions of Advisory Programs and Perceptions for School Connectedness

Domain	Beginning			Experienced		
	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>
Relationships	.877	10	.001	.513	18	.030
Engagement	.736	9	.024	.601	18	.008
Belonging	.794	11	.004	.791	18	.000

RQ5. To what extent is there a difference in the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness between male and female students? In order to address this research question, the following three research hypotheses were tested:

Research Hypothesis 9: A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student-teacher relationships and school connectedness between male and female students.

This hypothesis was tested by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to index the strength and direction of the relationship between male students' perceptions of student-teacher relationships and male students' perceptions for school connectedness, resulting in a calculated correlation of $r = .533$. A second correlation

coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between female students' perceptions of student-teacher relationships and female students' perceptions for school connectedness, with a calculated correlation of $r = .380$. In order to test if a difference existed between the correlation for male students and the correlation for female students, a Fisher's z test was utilized. Using Fisher's formula to calculate z , the standardized difference for student-teacher relationship domain within advisory program behaviors was found to be ($z = 1.40$). To determine whether the difference was statistically significant, a hypothesis test was conducted with critical value z set at 1.96. The calculated correlation between the two variables was not different for male students and female students, because the z value was contained in the interval $-1.96 < z < 1.96$. There is not sufficient evidence to support the research hypothesis; thus, the correlation between perceptions of student-teacher relationships within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness is not different for male and female students at Spring Garden Middle School.

Research Hypothesis 10: A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of student engagement and school connectedness between male and female students.

This hypothesis was tested by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to index the strength and direction of the relationship between male students' perceptions of student engagement within advisory program behaviors and male students' perceptions for school connectedness, resulting in a calculated correlation of $r = .696$. A second correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between female students' perceptions of student engagement and female

students' perceptions for school connectedness, with a calculated correlation of $r = .585$. In order to test if a difference existed between the correlation for male students and the correlation for female students, a Fisher's z test was utilized. Using Fisher's formula to calculate z , the standardized difference for student engagement domain within advisory program behaviors was found to be ($z = 1.01$). To determine whether the difference was statistically significant, a hypothesis test was conducted with critical value z set at 1.96. The calculated correlation between the two variables was not different for male students and female students, because the z value was contained in the interval $-1.96 < z < 1.96$. There is not sufficient evidence to support the research hypothesis; thus, the correlation between perceptions of student engagement within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness is not different for male and female students at Spring Garden Middle School.

Research Hypothesis 11: A difference exists in the relationship between perceptions of sense of belonging and school connectedness between male and female students.

This hypothesis was tested by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to index the strength and direction of the relationship between male students' perceptions of sense of belonging and male students' perceptions for school connectedness, resulting in a calculated correlation of $r = .521$. A second correlation coefficient was calculated to index the strength and direction of the relationship between female students' perceptions of sense of belonging and female students' perceptions for school connectedness, with a calculated correlation of $r = .434$. In order to test if a difference existed between the correlation for male students and the correlation for

female students, a Fisher's z test was utilized. Using Fisher's formula to calculate z , the standardized difference for sense of belonging domain within advisory program behaviors was found to be ($z = .792$). To determine whether the difference was statistically significant, a hypothesis test was conducted with critical value z set at 1.96. The calculated correlation between the two variables was not different for male students and female students, because the z value was contained in the interval $-1.96 < z < 1.96$. There is not sufficient evidence to support the research hypothesis; thus, the correlation between perceptions of sense of belonging within advisory program behaviors and school connectedness is not different for male and female students at Spring Garden Middle School.

Table 6

Correlations between Male and Female Students' Perceptions of Advisory Programs and Perceptions of School Connectedness

Domain	Male			Female		
	r	n	p	r	n	p
Relationships	.533	180	.000	.380	162	.000
Engagement	.696	175	.000	.585	164	.000
Belonging	.521	177	.000	.434	161	.000

Summary

This chapter presented results of calculation and testing of the correlations coefficients used to address the research questions. Results of the hypothesis testing indicated the presence of a statistically significant relationship between school

connectedness and advisory program behaviors from the perception of both students and advisors. However examination of the differences in the relationship between the advisory program behavior domains and school connectedness between students and advisors, between male and female students, and between experienced and new teachers did not reveal statistically significant differences. Chapter five contains findings from the study, provides connections to the literature, discusses implications for action, and makes recommendations for future study.

Chapter Five

Interpretation and Recommendations

The first chapter of this study introduced the background, purpose and significance of the study. The second chapter presented a review of relevant literature, including school advisory programs with specific attention given to what constitutes school connectedness and variables affecting the relationship between advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. The third chapter reviewed the methodology of the study, including the sampling procedures, instrumentation used, data collection procedures, data analysis, and hypothesis testing. The fourth chapter included the results of descriptive statistics and hypotheses testing. This chapter presents a brief overview of the problem, purpose, research questions, methodology, and major findings of the study. Additionally, findings related to relevant literature on advisory programs and school connectedness, implications for action, and recommendations for future research are addressed.

Study Summary

In this section, a brief overview is presented of chapters one through four of the study. The overview contains a review of the problem, the purpose statement and research questions, a review of the methodology, and the major findings of the study.

Overview of the Problem. Advisory programs are frequently proposed in middle-level reform, even though there is limited research on the effectiveness of advisory programs due to limited practice within schools. According to Stevenson (2001), teacher advisory is an excellent idea in the middle-level, although it is the most inadequately implemented program. Advisory programs remain one of the most difficult

of the middle grades programmatic components to implement (Fenwick, 1992; Lounsbury & Clark, 1990; National Middle School Association, 2006). Blum's (2005a) research supports that non-academic aspects of school are significant contributors to both school and student success. Creating trusting relationships and ensuring that every student feels close to at least one adult at school are strategies that support increased school connectedness. Students who have at least one adult in school who understands their social and emotional development are more likely to stay in school (McCloskey, 2007).

Due to national legislation, school reform efforts have changed focus throughout the United States, a result of pressure for continued school improvement and increased standardized achievement scores. The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has mandated, indirectly, that school personnel ignore the social and emotional needs of the whole child due to time or budgetary constraints, instead emphasizing cognitive or academic success of students (Center on Education Policy, 2008). Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) stated that there was a volatile mismatch between the organization and curriculum of middle schools and the intellectual and emotional needs of young adolescents. According to the National Middle School Association (NMSA), there is an expanding amount of literature on advisory programs, although few researchers have systematically studied the subjective experiences of students and teachers within advisory programs (NMSA, 2006). Advisory programs continue to be recommended, although they have been a challenge to implement and sustain (Anfara, 2006). In the search to identify advisory program behaviors that improve student connectedness, previous studies have indicated positive relationships between advisory

programs and school connectedness (Shulkind, 2007). Studies have also indicated a positive relationship between advisory program behaviors and student-teacher relationships, ultimately impacting student motivation, discipline, and achievement (Foote, 2007). Further investigation is needed regarding the relationship between what behaviors within an advisory program impact a student's connectedness to school. Additional examination is also needed regarding what advisors perceive compared to students' perceptions of what behaviors within an advisory program impact school connectedness.

Review of Purpose Statement and Research Questions. The focus of this study was Spring Garden Middle School in St. Joseph, Missouri. The purpose of this study was to conduct a comparison of students' and advisors' perceptions about advisory program behaviors in relationship to students' and advisors' perceptions of school connectedness. A second purpose was to explore the difference in the perceptions of beginning advisors and the perceptions of experienced advisors about advisory program behaviors. Thirdly, the study examined the differences in the perceptions of male and female students about advisory programs. Thus, this study examined whether advisory programs are critical components that influence student-teacher relationships, school engagement, and a student's sense of belonging, ultimately impacting school connectedness. Two research questions were addressed to determine the relationship between the following: school connectedness as measured by the students' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness as measured by the advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors. Three additional research questions were posed to examine to what extent there is a difference in the correlations from the

perceptions of advisors and students, between beginning and experienced advisors, and between male and female students when examining advisory program behaviors and school connectedness.

Review of the Methodology. This quantitative correlational research study examined the relationship between students' and advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and students' and advisors' perceptions of school connectedness for Spring Garden Middle School in St. Joseph, Missouri. The numerical variables in this study included the student and advisor perceptions of school engagement, students' sense of belonging, student-teacher relationships and school connectedness. The variables were measured through the Student Advisory Program Questionnaire, the Advisory Questionnaire, the Student School Connectedness, and the Advisor School Connectedness. The questionnaires allowed the researcher to gather perceptual data to indicate what advisory program behaviors, advisory classmates' behaviors, and advisor behaviors, if any, enhance school connectedness because of teacher-student relationships, engagement, and sense of belonging. In addition, the data allowed the researcher to examine the difference in perceptions between beginning advisors and experienced advisors as well as the difference in male and female perceptions. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the strength of the relationships between each pair of variables. Additionally, Fisher's z was used to analyze to what extent there were differences in the correlations between advisors and students, between new and experienced advisors, and between male and female students

Major Findings. The research revealed that Spring Garden Middle School students' perceptions of advisory program behaviors included in the sample for this study

of advisory program behaviors did have a positive relationship with students' perceptions of school connectedness. The researcher included three domains of advisory behaviors: meaningful student-teacher relationships, engagement in school, and sense of belonging within advisory program behaviors. The researcher examined the relationship between each domain and school connectedness for students. Engagement in school was found to have the strongest relationship with school connectedness, while student-teacher relationships had the weakest, although positive and statistically significant, relationship with school connectedness.

Spring Garden Middle School advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors did have a positive relationship with their perceptions of school connectedness. The relationships to advisors' perceptions of school connectedness were positive for the three advisory program domains: student-teacher relationships, student engagement, and sense of belonging. The advisors' perceptions of a student's sense of belonging was found to have the strongest relationship with the advisors' perception of school connectedness for a student, while the advisors' perceptions of student-teacher relationships and engagement were related, though the relationship was not as strong.

Beginning advisors' and experienced advisors' responses did not provide evidence to demonstrate a difference in the relationship between the perceptions of advisory program behaviors and perceptions of school connectedness when examining the student-teacher relationships, student engagement, and a student's sense of belonging domains within advisory program behaviors. However, both beginning advisors' and experienced advisors' responses revealed a positive and strong to moderately strong

relationship between the perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness.

Lastly, in the current study, there were no differences in the relationship between perceptions of advisory program behaviors and perceptions of school connectedness between male and female students. When examining the student-teacher relationships, student engagement, and a student's sense of belonging domains within advisory program behaviors, the strongest relationship occurred within the perceptions of the student-teacher domain and school connectedness and the weakest relationship falls within the perceptions of the sense of belonging domain and school connectedness, according to both male and female responses, but not a statistically significant difference according to gender. Specifically in this study, the male and female responses provided evidence for positive and moderately strong relationships in all three domains of advisory program behaviors.

Findings Related to the Literature

In this section, connections are made between the findings of this study and those found in previous studies. A comparison of the results of this study with those presented in chapter two unveils many similarities and a few differences. For example, the results of this study provided evidence that a teacher-student relationship was a significant component in advisory programs for impacting school connectedness. Such results are consistent with Foote's (2007) findings that indicated positive youth development occurred, due to the direct interaction between students and teachers, resulting in improved student motivation, which could impact an individual's connectedness to school. In addition, the current study's results concur with Buchanan and Bowen's

(2009) findings that there is a relationship between peer and adult support related to an adolescent's psychological well-being. In their study, students with high psychological well-being had a strong combination of both adult and peer support, which would indicate a positive student-teacher relationship. Although psychological well-being and school connectedness are not the same thing, within an academic setting, school connectedness would be an indicator of psychological well-being. Moreover, the current study's findings are consistent with those of Espe (1993) and Totten and Nelson (1994) indicating improved relationships between student and teachers resulting from advisory programs. Also, researcher Johnson's (2009) study revealed that teachers greatly value relationships and time with students; they struggle finding time to plan advisories well.

However, the current study's findings contrast with the findings of Hughes and Kwok (2007) regarding the role that gender plays. The current study's findings indicate that gender is not significant when looking at the relationship between student-teacher relationships and school connectedness. Hughes and Kwok's (2007) study revealed that factors such as race, socio-economic status, gender, temperament, and type of relationship the child had with primary caregiver are factors that affect student-teacher relationships. Although the results of this study lists gender as a specific factor, the current study indicates that there is no difference in male and female perceptions in relationship to student-teacher relationships. Regardless of gender, much of the literature supports the need for creating a positive and caring relationship between students and adults who are responsible for teaching. Furthermore, a study was conducted by McClure, Yonezawa, and Jones (2011) examining the role of teacher-student relationships, revealing that relationships have a greater impact when they are informal

compared to those of a structured advisory program. Regarding the impact of gender and school connectedness, the current study revealed no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions about advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. This study was conducted over a three-year period with a population of fourteen schools. Such findings are in contrast with Stracuzzi and Mills (2010). They indicated differences in males and females when addressing school connectedness, although their study revealed that students who feel more connected to schools do well in schools and have higher self-esteem, less depression, decreased substance use, and not as many aggressive behaviors. In addition to Stracuzzi and Mills (2010), Whitlock's (2003) study also indicated gender as a predictor for school connectedness.

The results of this study also provided evidence of significant levels of school connectedness in relation to behaviors that support students' sense of belonging. The findings of the study agree with Osterman (2000) who provided evidence that there were links between a student's sense of belonging and attachment to school. In addition, Mulvey and Cauffman (2001) found that having an attachment to school, which they indicate as a sense of belonging, was effective in reducing school discipline occurrences. Specifically, the current study's results agree with the findings of Blum (2005b), who identified students with a high level of school connectedness as those who perceived their teachers as caring and having high expectations within the learning environment. According to Blum (2005b), increased student connection to school decreases absenteeism, fighting, bullying, and vandalism while promoting motivation, classroom engagement, academic performance, attendance, and graduation rates. According to researcher Walloff (2011), previous studies have found advisories to be effective, but the

majority of the studies primarily focused on middle school advisory programs or programs within private schools. “As students get closer to adulthood, schools often become more isolating and impersonal (Shulkind & Blum, 2009, p.27). The positive relationship between high levels of school connectedness and advisory programs, which impact the whole child, as documented in this and other studies, give reason for high school administrators to carefully consider the significance advisory programs can have for supporting students.

The study’s results also provided evidence that advisory programs provide support for meeting the whole child needs of middle school students, including both affective and cognitive. The results of this study reflect the ways teacher-student relationships, school engagement, and sense of belonging, support social, emotional, and cognitive needs. The current study’s results agree with the findings of Goodwin (2003) who believes that advisory groups provide the needed support during the developmental stage of middle school students. In addition, researcher Caswell (2003) found that advisory programs have significant impact on not only student achievement but also student adjustment. The current study’s results mirror those found by researchers McClure, Yonezawa, and Jones (2010) when reflecting on the rationale for advisory programs as having components that support students having a sense of belonging, meaningful relationships, and engagement within school.

The researcher determined several potential causes for the overall differences in the findings of this study compared to the studies examined in the literature. First, the methodology in the current study differs from those used in other studies. This study used a research design that was a quantitative correlational study between numerical

independent variables, while many studies within the review of literature included qualitative measures as well. Another potential cause for the difference in the findings of this study is the population used in each study. While this study focused on one middle school, example studies presented in the review of literature included more than one school site. A third potential cause for the difference in the findings of this study compared to other studies presented is the manner in which school connectedness, student-teacher relationships, sense of belonging, and student engagement were measured for both students and advisors. In this study, the questionnaires measured these components through the perceptions of students and advisors. Other studies presented may have measured these areas with different criteria.

Conclusions

The last section of chapter five provides closure to the study. In this section, the researcher presents practical applications of the findings; suggestions for future research, and concluding remarks are made.

Implications for Action. As stated in chapter one, national legislation has impacted school reform efforts, creating a shift in focus as well as pressure for continued school improvement and increased standardized achievement scores for students' learning. Schools are faced with many difficult decisions, especially time, budgetary constraints, and added accountability for academic success, all while needing to find a means to address a student's social and emotional needs. The findings of this study revealed that the recommended middle level reform component of all students having at least one adult advocate who supports a student's academic and personal development through an advisory program is valuable for the whole child. The advisory program

should be an arrangement within the school setting whereby one adult and a small group of students have an opportunity to interact on a scheduled basis in order to provide a caring environment for academic guidance (Burkhardt, 1999). Advisory program structures provide a systematic access to an adult advocate within a school setting. It is imperative that advisory programs are not replacing advocacy components with academic instruction (NMSA, 2006). “Advisory gets you into the state of mind that school is not only about work, but that is a place where teachers really know you and understand you” (Shulkind & Foote, 2009, p.27).

As was indicated in chapter four, this study’s evidence supported a strong correlation between advisory program behaviors that lend themselves to supporting a student’s connectedness. However, this study revealed that advisors’ perceptions about a sense of belonging had the strongest correlation with school connectedness. Thus, it is important for educational leaders and advisors to examine critically the environment, structure, and what specific behaviors within advisory programs constitute effective advisors. In accordance with these beliefs, effective advisory programs:

- address issues of community;
- promote open communication;
- choose advisors who know and care about their advisees;
- choose advisors who closely supervise their advisees’ academic progress;
- choose advisors who are problem solvers and advice givers;
- improve academic performance;
- function as a community of learners (Shlkind & Foote, 2009).

The current study's findings of students' perceptions and advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and students' and advisors' perceptions of school connectedness having a positive statistically significant relationship have significant implications for high school advisory program initiatives.

Additionally, this study offers implications into the vast array of advisor and advisee behaviors that emerge within advisory programs. This study in particular identified several links: teacher-student relationships, school engagement, and sense of belonging, between advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. School leaders should be cognizant of design and implementation of advisory programs in order to support the whole child. According to Cushman (1999), preparing for an advisory session is just as important as preparing for a class. Therefore, adequate time is needed to for staff development for advisors on skills that support the developmental needs of the whole child, which include social, emotional, and cognitive needs. In addition, advisors should have a clear focus and establish common principals that advisories will focus on.

Recommendations for Future Research. The researcher examined the relationship between students' and advisors' perceptions of advisory program behaviors and school connectedness. Additionally, the relationship was examined to glean whether there were differences in the relationships between students and advisor, beginning and experienced advisors, and male and female students. Recommendations for future research to improve and extend this research include the following:

1. A researcher could expand the current study with multiple schools with similar sized samples, in order to validate research findings. In addition, a researcher

could conduct a comparative study between the schools in order to determine the differences in impact upon school connectedness.

2. A researcher could replicate the current case study using longitudinal data to assess the relationship between advisory program behaviors and school connectedness over time.
3. A researcher could conduct the current study with the inclusion of parents' perceptions of the impact advisory program behaviors have on school connectedness for students.
4. A researcher could expand the current study with additional variables of academic achievement, discipline data, and attendance rates. Additional variables offer insight into the impact advisory programs could have on the 'whole' child.
5. A researcher could conduct a comparative study between high performing and low performing schools in relationship to advisory programs in order to determine the differences in impact upon student achievement.
6. A researcher might conduct a study comparing structured advisory programs with adopted curriculum to unstructured advisory programs. In the case study, a researcher could examine the behaviors that occur within the different advisory structures in order to determine the differences in impact upon students and school connectedness.
7. A researcher could expand the current study with qualitative research using interviews, observations, and focus groups to support the quantitative research measures already revealed.

8. A researcher could conduct a study of high school students who have continued or discontinued an advisory program from middle school to high school in order to offer insight into the impact advisory programs have with the 'whole' child.

Concluding Remarks.

This study examined the relationship between advisory program behaviors and school connectedness for both students and advisors. Additionally, the data were analyzed to determine to what extent there was a difference between advisors and students, beginning and experienced advisors and gender of students. The school included in this study was Spring Garden Middle School in the academic year of 2011-12. Analysis revealed a positive relationship between school connectedness in relationship to advisory program behaviors. However, gender and an advisor's years of experience had no significant difference in the relationship. School administrators can use the results of this study to plan appropriate professional development for their own advisory program. Increasing a student's school connectedness can positively impact the success of the whole child. Policy makers and school leaders must assess the holistic needs of adolescents and be willing to address not only their academic needs but also their affective needs. Implementation of an advisory program is one initiative that can provide a developmentally responsive learning environment to assist in addressing the needs of adolescents.

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Appendix A: Student Questionnaire

Student Advisory Program Questionnaire

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by doctoral candidate, Lara Gilpin. The purpose of the study is to do a comparison of student and advisor perceptions about advisory program behaviors in relationship to school connectedness. Within this study, school connectedness equates to sense of belonging, meaningful relationships, and school engagement. A second purpose is to explore the difference in perceptions of beginning and experienced advisors. Thirdly, the study will examine a comparison of perceptions in relationship to gender. Your privacy is important; your answers will be combined with other participants and reported in summary form. There is not penalty should you choose not to participate or answer all of the questions. Your completion and submission of the survey will indicate your consent to participate and permission to use the information that you have provided in my study. Thank you so much for your time.

* Required

Student Questionnaire

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Advisory is a comfortable place to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In advisory, we have discussions on many different topics.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In advisory, we are comfortable expressing our feelings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In advisory, we trust each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisory classmates help me with my schoolwork.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In advisory, we encourage each other to do well in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisory classmates take my opinion seriously.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have friends in my advisory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The people in my	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
advisory care about me.				
We listen to each other in advisory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The people in my advisory make me feel like I am part of the school community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When we come to advisory, my advisor is happy to see us.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor encourages us to share our thoughts and opinions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I have good news, I am excited to share it with my advisor.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor is someone I can count on.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor thinks my ideas are important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust the advice my advisor gives me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor listens more than he or she speaks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor talks to me about my schoolwork.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor knows which school subjects are the hardest for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel comfortable speaking to my advisor when I am having trouble in classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
My advisor expects me to do well in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor is fair in the way he or she treats us.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor understands me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advisory helps me to feel more involved in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advisory helps me to be a successful student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When my advisor gives me directions, I do what he or she says.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think school will help me achieve my goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advisory is like my family within school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In advisory, I set goals for my future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am an important part of my advisory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I care about what the people in my advisory think.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I follow the rules in my classes and at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I arrive at school on time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I come prepared for my classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am respected at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

School Connectedness

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I have a sense of belonging and being a part of Spring Garden Middle School.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like Spring Garden Middle School.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teachers are supporting and caring.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have good friends at Spring Garden Middle School.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am engaged in my academic progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that discipline is fair and effective at Spring Garden Middle School.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I participate in extracurricular activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demographic Question *

	1 year	2 years
Number of years you have been with your current advisor.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current grade for the 2011-2012 school year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demographic Question *

- Male
- Female

Student ID Number *

Appendix B: Advisor Questionnaire

Advisor Questionnaire

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by doctoral candidate, Lara Gilpin. The purpose of the study is to do a comparison of student and advisor perceptions about advisory program behaviors in relationship to school connectedness. Within this study, school connectedness equates to sense of belonging, meaningful relationships, and school engagement. A second purpose is to explore the difference in perceptions of beginning and experienced advisors. Thirdly, the study will examine a comparison of perceptions in relationship to gender. Your privacy is important; your answers will be combined with other participants and reported in summary form. There is not penalty should you choose not to participate or answer all of the questions. Your completion and submission of the survey will indicate your consent to participate and permission to use the information that you have provided in my study. Thank you so much for your time.

* Required

Advisor Questionnaire

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I feel comfortable working in the role as an advisor.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I encourage my advisees to share their opinions or thoughts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisees believe that I want them to be successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am someone that my advisees can count on.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in my advisees' ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisees value my advice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In advisory, I listen more than I speak.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk with my advisees about their relationships with their teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk with my advisees about their peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I know which school subjects are hardest for each of my advisees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisees come to me when they are having difficulty in their classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect my advisees to do well in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisees come to me to share good news.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisees follow the rules in my advisory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If my advisees have academic problems, I am involved in the resolution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have adequate time to function effectively as an advisor.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The skills I need to be an effective advisor are different than the skills I need to be an effective teacher.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The students in my regular classes are performing better as a result of being a part of my advisory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The students in my regular classes are more motivated as a result of being a part of my advisory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If my advisees have behavioral problems, I	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
am involved in the resolution.				
The benefits of advisory are worth the extra effort that it requires.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I help my advisees come prepared and organized for their classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The things my advisees learn in advisory will help them to achieve goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get support from my colleagues when I struggle with their advisory groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to help my colleagues when they struggle with their advisory groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisory is like a family within the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In advisory, we have worked to set personal and academic goals for the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other teachers come to me when they are having trouble with one of my advisees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In advisory, the students trust each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In adviosry, the	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
students are comfortable expressing their feelings.				
My advisees care about each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisees encourage one another to do well in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisees listen to each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisees feel connected to each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having an advisory program helps the school function more effectively in meeting our students' needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The advisory program tends to unite the faculty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being an advisor has improved my teaching practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My work as an advisory has improved over time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The things that I learn about my students help me in my other classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working as an advisor has caused me to change the way that I teach.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel closer to the students in my advisory	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

than the students in my regular classes.

Advisory is an important part of forming school culture among teachers.

At times, I feel torn between being a teacher and being an advisor.

Demographic Question *

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demographic Question *	Less than 1 year	1 to 2 years	2 to 3 years	3 to 4 years
Number of years I have been an advisory at SGMS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demographic Question *

	Less than 1 year	1 to 2 years
Number of years I have been an advisor for my 8th grade students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demographic Questions *

- Male
- Female

Appendix C: Student School Connectedness

School Connectedness

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I have a sense of belonging and being a part of Spring Garden Middle School.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like Spring Garden Middle School.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teachers are supporting and caring.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have good friends at Spring Garden Middle School.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am engaged in my academic progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that discipline is fair and effective at Spring Garden Middle School.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I participate in extracurricular activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix D: Advisor School Connectedness

School Connectedness

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I am someone that my advisees can count on.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisory is like a family within the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In advisory, we have worked to set personal and academic goals for the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisees feel connected to each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix E: IRB



School of education
Graduate department

IRB PROTOCOL NUMBER _____

Date: 12/20/12 _____

(irb USE ONLY)

**IRB Request
Proposal for Research
Submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board**

I. Research Investigator(s) (Students must list faculty sponsor first)

Department(s) School of Education Graduate Department

Name

Signature

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Brad Tate | _____ | Major Advisor |
| 2. Margaret Waterman | _____ | Research Analyst |
| 3. Dr. Robert Frye | _____ | University Committee Member |
| 4. Judith Fuston | _____ | External Committee Member |

Principal Investigator: Lara A. Gilpin
Phone: 816-262-6538
Email: lara.gilpin@sjsd.k12.mo.us
Mailing address: 14234 Co. Rd. 348 St. Joseph, MO 64505

Faculty sponsor: Dr. Brad Tate
Phone: 913-491-4432
Email: brad.tate@bakeru.edu
Expected Category of Review: Exempt Expedited Full

II: Protocol Title: Comparing the Perceptions of Students and Advisors in Relationship to Behaviors that Occur Within An Advisory Program

Summary

The following summary must accompany the proposal. Be specific about exactly what participants will experience, and about the protections that have been included to safeguard participants from harm. Careful attention to the following may help facilitate the review process:

In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

The purpose of the study is to compare student and advisor perceptions about advisory program behaviors in relationship to school connectedness. The degree of school connectedness will be determined by behaviors that occur within an Advisory Program that lend themselves to students feeling connected to school, by having a sense of belonging, positive student-teacher relationships, and being engaged within school. Therefore, my primary goal is to evaluate advisory programs that enhance school connectedness. The study will include a mid-size urban middle school, Spring Garden Middle School, located in Northwest Missouri. The sample will consist of Spring Garden Middle School students and staff.

Briefly describe each condition or manipulation to be included within the study.

There are no conditions or manipulation included in the study.

What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.

A Student Advisory Program Questionnaire and Advisor Questionnaire will be used to obtain student and advisor perceptions. The student advisory program questionnaire is an anonymous fixed-response instrument used to capture the range of perceptions about behaviors within an advisory program that support adult relationships, a child's engagement within school, and a sense of belonging, which should impact school connectedness. There is an additional seven fixed-response set of questions used to glean students' perceptions about school connectedness. The advisor questionnaire is an anonymous fixed-response instrument used to gather the perceptions about behaviors within the advisory program that influence adult relationships, a child's engagement within school, and a sense of belonging, ultimately impacting school connectedness. The Student Advisory Program Questionnaire is included in this document in Appendix A. The Advisor Questionnaire is included in this document in Appendix B.

Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical, or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

There will be no risk of psychological, social, physical, or legal risk.

Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

There will not be any stress to subjects involved in the study.

Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.

Subjects will not be deceived or misled in any way.

Will there be a request for information that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.

The data used in this study is anonymous. No, there will not be a request for information that might be considered personal or sensitive.

Will the subjects be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.

Subjects will not be presented with materials that might be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading.

Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

Approximately 25 to 30 minutes will be demanded of each subject.

Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information, which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.

The subjects in this study will be Spring Garden Middle School students and staff. Students will be contacted during their social studies class. Staff will be contacted during a staff meeting. Both students and staff will receive solicitation in both written and oral format.

Script: You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by doctoral candidate, Lara Gilpin. The purpose of the study is to compare student and advisor perceptions of the advisory program and school connectedness. Within this study, school connectedness equates to sense of belonging, meaningful relationships, and school engagement.

Your privacy is important; your answers will be combined with other participants and reported in summary form. There is not a penalty should you choose not to participate or answer all of the questions. Your completion and submission of the survey will indicate your consent to participate and permission to use the information that you have provided in my study.

Thank you so much for your time.

What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

All subjects will be given the opportunity to complete a survey on the computer. Inducements of ice cream will be given to staff members for completion of survey.

How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

All students and staff will be participating for program evaluation purposes.

Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

No data will be made part of any permanent record as a result of this study.

Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher or employer? If so, explain.

No data will be made part of any permanent record as a result of this study.

What steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the data? Where will it be stored? How long will it be stored? What will be done with it after the study is complete?

To insure confidentiality of the data, the students and staff will enter all survey data. Data will be stored on a Google document. The data will be stored until the completion of the research study. Following the research study, the data will be deleted from Google documents.

If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

There is no risk involved in this research study.

Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

Yes, archival data will be accessed from Spring Garden Middle School.

Appendix F: IRB Approval



January 30, 2013

Lara A. Gilpin
14234 Co. Rd. 348
St. Joseph, MO 64505

Dear Ms. Gilpin:

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your research project application (M-0157-0125-0130-G) and approved this project under Exempt Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

The Baker University IRB requires that your consent form must include the date of approval and expiration date (one year from today). Please be aware of the following:

1. At designated intervals (usually annually) until the project is completed, a Project Status Report must be returned to the IRB.
2. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
3. Notify the OIR about any new investigators not named in original application.
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported to the IRB Chair or representative immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity. If you use a signed consent form, provide a copy of the consent form to subjects at the time of consent.
6. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.

Please inform Office of Institutional Research (OIR) or myself when this project is terminated. As noted above, you must also provide OIR with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If your project receives funding which requests an annual update approval, you must request this from the IRB one month prior to the annual update. Thanks for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Doolittle, EdD
Chair, Baker University IRB
