

**THE EFFECTS OF TRANSITION ACTIVITIES ON STUDENTS  
ANTICIPATION AND APPREHENSION ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine and evaluate how student perceptions were affected by participation in transition activities from middle school to high school in a suburban public school district in Missouri. Pretest and posttest comparisons of student responses using a paired samples t test and the Perceptions of Transition Survey revealed significant differences in student perceptions of anticipation and apprehension regarding academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school. Student's anticipation included the freedom to choose some classes (academic), making new friends (social), and being in a larger school (organizational). Student's apprehension included too much homework (academic), being safe (social), and new rules (organizational). The results of this study indicated mixed evidence related to student perceptions of anticipation and apprehension regarding academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school transition. The findings can be used to help the target district and other districts to gain insights from the perceptions of students as related to the impact of transition programs and activities on student and school success. Additionally, this study can serve as a resource for planning a more comprehensive standardized transition program. The information should be useful in assisting school counselors and administrators in developing proactive interventions that enable students and their families to negotiate the new school environment successfully and to minimize problems that may arise due to transition.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The transition from middle school to high school is difficult for many students and is particularly difficult for ninth grade students who are considered at-risk (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). Currently, there is a lack of research on students' perceptions of the impact of transition and the potential of programs to assist students in a seamless movement from middle to high school (Smith, 2006). Educational research on the impact of transition and transition programs in this area is imperative in order to expand the knowledge base for parents and educators of all students, especially students who are at risk of academic failure in America's high schools.

Recognizing the transition from middle school to high school as difficult, legislators, scholars, and educators contemplate what schools can do to improve achievement and performance of ninth grade students at this critical time in their lives. Black (1999) noted most students make a smooth transition, but others get lost in the maze of corridors, fast-paced schedules, and rigorous course requirements.

Schiller (1999) defined middle to high school transition as "a process during which institutional and social factors influence which students' educational careers are positively or negatively affected by the movement between organizations" (pp. 216-217). Transition programs are sets of programs and activities designed to address the needs of students affected by the movement between schools or grade levels. Schiller's definition, indicating successful transition as vital for future success, includes the collective efforts of schools and parents in effectively meeting the needs of ninth grade students.

## Problem Statement

Extensive research has been conducted on strategies to ease the transition from middle school to high school (Arowosafe-Schumacher & Irvin, 1998; MacIver, 1990; Paulson, 1994). These studies examined such transition strategies as teaming, advisement programs, and orientation activities. The concept of examining students' perceptions of the transition process has been largely ignored. There is little empirical research on student perceptions of the effectiveness of transition activities that are designed to facilitate student movement from middle school to high school. This study was designed to identify student perceptions of the effectiveness of Lee's Summit's Missouri School District's transition activities as reflected in their responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The survey specifically identifies anticipation of and apprehension regarding academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school.

Bunting (2004) made a valid point when she stated for a transition program to be successful, teachers from the middle school and high school must work together to blend the two levels. No longer is it beneficial or useful to have middle school students experience the 1-day high school orientation experience followed by speeches. Instead, Bunting recommended repeated encounters with the high school for longer periods of time before the actual transition from middle school to high school occurs.

Lee's Summit School District does not have a formalized transition program. However, the district does have a series of transition activities in which students and parents engage during the second semester of their eighth grade year and first semester of their ninth grade year. The district has determined that examination of the perceptions of students and an analysis of data linked to which activities are most successful would be

valuable in providing district direction for the consideration and implementation of a more comprehensive transition program. The review of the literature in Chapter Two presents a variety of transition programs and activities as it relates to student perceptions of anticipation of and apprehension about high school.

### Background

Each year across the nation, millions of adolescents make the transition from middle school to high school. Most adolescents pass through the transition stage without significant stress or major problems. Some, however, enter the freshman year with concerns related to a variety of issues such as being bullied, experiencing harder work, earning lower grades, getting lost in the crowd, and fearing the unknown (Akos, 2002). Many of these anxieties could be reduced with an effective transition program.

Success in today's increasingly competitive global society and economy necessitates that all students graduate from high school. Yet, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2007), nearly 1.2 million students do not graduate from high school on time. These nearly 1.2 million students, or approximately 1 in 8, drop out at a rate of one every 9 seconds of each school day (Reimer & Smink, 2005). A review of the *Education Pipeline*, a national report on the state of education, stated the rate at which students between ninth and tenth grade leave school has tripled over the last three decades (Haney et al., 2004).

The national expectation, stated in *Goals 2000*, was to reach a 90% high school completion rate by the year 2000; yet the most recent report indicated only 17 states reached this goal (U.S. Department of Education, National Council of Education Statistics [NCES], 2002). Recent statistics reflecting the percentage of eighth grade

students who graduate 5 years later range from a low of 57% in Nevada to a high of 87% in Nebraska (NCES, 2003). Given a national graduation rate of approximately 68% (Swanson, 2004), Balfanz and Legters (2004) reported nearly 300 schools in 35 of the largest U.S. cities graduate less than 50% of their ninth grade student populations. Other data accentuate the severity of the problem across the nation, especially for various ethnic and economically disadvantaged student populations (Children's Defense Fund, 2005).

Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) offered specific data that indicated race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status influence student ability to graduate from high school. Among minorities, only 58% of Hispanic students and 55% of Black students graduate within 4 years, compared with 78% of White students. Alliance for Excellent Education also reported male students are consistently 7-8% less likely to graduate than are female students. The gap is as large as 14% between male and female Black students (Monrad, 2007). Monrad cited the National Center for Education Statistics, saying high school students from low-income families (the lowest 20%) were six to seven times more likely to drop out than were students from higher income families.

The ninth grade year is a decisive turning point for many students. An examination of research on dropouts suggested unsuccessful high school transitions might contribute to high dropout rates, low on-time graduation rates, and low achievement in American high schools (Herlihy, 2007). Clearly, the transition to high school has never been more perilous nor the consequences more personally disastrous for so many young teens (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). These students, unprepared for the

transition to high school and the rigorous curriculum demands, often fail to connect their high school academic experiences to the future.

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2007), high school dropouts face multiple hardships during their lives. They have more difficulty finding work than those who complete high school and then continue to postsecondary education. Dropouts' earnings are significantly lower than are those of high school graduates. A single 18-year-old dropout earns \$260,000 less over a lifetime and contributes \$60,000 less in federal and state income taxes. Dropouts make up nearly half of the heads of household on welfare, and dropouts make up more than half of the prison population (Monrad, 2007).

Studies have illustrated making a positive, meaningful, and effective transition to high school assists students in developing lifelong connections to education and enhances students' chances of graduating (Legters & Kerr, 2000). Thoroughly preparing students for the transition is critical to reducing the failure rate that often accompanies the ninth grade class. Hertzog and Morgan (1998) found transition programs designed with extensive components to ease student anxiety are more likely to assist in reducing dropout rates and promoting retention.

Encouraging students to make a successful transition into a new educational setting should be one of the highest priorities for all high schools, especially those trying to reduce dropout rates. Yet, the challenges facing the U.S. educational system are discouraging and often overwhelming for those whose goal is increasing the matriculation rate of American youth. In a thorough review of the literature, Mizelle and Irvin (2000) related statistics showing that more students fail ninth grade than any other year in school. As an explanation for the failure rate, Barone, Acuirre-Deandreis, and

Trickett (1991) revealed ninth grade students have shown a decline in grades and attendance. In a 1996 article in the newsletter, *Becoming* entitled “Transition to High School. A Look at Student Perceptions,” Hertzog and Morgan (as cited in Mizelle & Irvin, 2000) indicated ninth graders have a more negative view of themselves than older students, while having an increased need for friendships and social interaction. The researchers suggested these anxieties and problems should prompt educators to provide challenging and supportive transition programs to meet the needs of students and their families effectively.

According to Akos (2002), the challenges faced by ninth grade students range from academic anxieties such as more rigorous grading policies to social adjustments such as finding a lunch buddy. Students and counselors identified social concerns such as getting lost, making friends, having teachers who will not embarrass them, having the correct appearance and clothes, keeping up with classmates in more competitive environments, and avoiding teasing or bullying by older students. In addition, Akos reported that students who expressed apprehension about high school also reported scholastic concerns such as balancing academics with after-school activities, having more homework and more difficult assignments, and responding to increased responsibilities and pressures at home and within the family. Students’ perceptions of themselves, their environment, and their relationships dramatically influence their future success or failure during the transition process. A possible lack of parental involvement and ineffective transition programs and activities from the middle school to the high school may also lead to negative academic consequences for many young adolescents (Falbo, Lein, & Amador, 2001).



The reasons for the declines in student achievement, grades, and attendance are varied and complex (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). Hertzog and Morgan (1998) stated, regardless of the reason, ninth grade students often decide whether or not to continue their education during this critical time. Hertzog and Morgan specifically stated, “Students will decide during the first few weeks of their freshmen year if they intend to continue their high school education” (p. 1). The high school setting, declines in grades and attendance, students’ perceptions, and the ability to make more choices may have a significant impact on ninth grade students’ academic, social, and organization aspects of high school (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). Research suggests there is a positive correlation between the ability of a transition program to address student concerns, perceptions, and progress and the students’ decision to remain in school

Lee’s Summit, the targeted suburban district in this study, is similar to many school districts nationwide seeking to ensure a successful middle to high school transition for all students. Unique aspects of Lee’s Summit include that it is one of the fastest growing areas in Missouri. The district encompasses 117 square miles and includes the cities of Lee’s Summit, Greenwood, Lake Lotawana, and Lake Winnebago. Formed in 1949, the district has grown dramatically from its initial 1,250 students to the current 17,000 students who attend the district’s 17 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 3 high schools.

Data reveal that students in the Lee’s Summit School District overall are successful in middle school to high school pursuits. They consistently rank above state and national norms in standardized testing, including the Missouri Assessment Program, the Stanford 9, and the ACT and SAT tests. Table 1 presents 2004-2008 information

about the ACT scores. Across all 5 years, between 48 % and 54 % of Lee's Summit students scored at or above the national average. Regardless of the district's ability to rank consistently above both state and national norms, it is vital to meet the needs of all students, and effective transition programs and activities are essential to student and school success.

Approximately 75% of the Lee's Summit district's high school graduates attend college (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], 2008). The high school graduation rate for the 2008 cohort in Table 2 is 93.5%. Lee's Summit's graduation rate is 8.3% higher than the state of Missouri graduation rate and approximately 25% above the national graduation rate. The annual dropout rate in the Lee's Summit School District is 1.3%. While a 1.3% dropout rate is not as significant as the state's dropout rate of 4.2% or the national dropout rate of 25%, the Lee's Summit School district is committed to meeting the needs of all students and is interested in evaluating the effectiveness of its transition activities.

The Lee's Summit School District maintains a strong tradition of preparing students for a "rapidly changing world" as the mission statement indicates. The district feels students need rigor, relevance and relationships provided to them through curricular and instructional programs designed to prepare them for the career of their choice. In the 2000-2001 school year, the district implemented the "Connecting Each Student to the Future (CESTTF) initiative. The designed outcome of CESTTF was to provide a seamless, comprehensive K-12 Career Connections system, which embraces all components of career education including career pathways and which prepares all students for their future. CESTTF components include high expectations for all students,

relevant instruction in ways that help all students achieve goals, career-focused learning, community involvement in teaching and learning, strong parent connections, increased employability skills and character development.

Although there have been many successes as a result of Connecting Each Student to the Future, the Advisory/Mentoring Program implemented in 2003 is specifically significant to this study. Upon entering ninth grade, each student is assigned a teacher advisor upon entering ninth grade. The advisor works with the student and his/her parents throughout high school to set and meet goals for a successful future while assisting to ease the transition from middle school to high school. Students meet with advisors weekly to identify interests, values and skills, explore educational and occupational possibilities, and formulate individual academic and career plans. Each spring parents and students meet with the student's teacher advisor to review the student's career goals/career pathway, interests and aptitudes, current four-year plan and the credits earned as a means of ensuring the student is selecting courses that will best prepare him/her for life after high school. In addition to the Advisory/Mentor Program, transition activities such as eighth grade counselor visits, eighth grade parent night/orientation meeting, eighth grade spring enrollment conferences, and freshmen transition/club day have been in existence for more than fifteen years.

### Significance

The current study was intended to assist Lee's Summit School District in identifying student perceptions of the effectiveness of the district's transition activities. The results of this study can be used by the target district and other districts to gain insights from the perceptions of students as related to the impact of transition programs

and activities on student and school success. In addition to providing the Lee's Summit School District with insights into the effectiveness of current transition activities, the study serves as a resource for planning a more comprehensive standardized transition program. The information should be useful to assist school counselors and administrators in developing proactive interventions that enable students and their families to negotiate the new school environment successfully and to minimize problems that may arise due to transition.

Table 1

*American College Test (ACT) Scores 2004-2008: Lee's Summit R-7 and Missouri*

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Graduates (<i>n</i>)</b>					
Lee's Summit R-7	1,018	1,057	1,128	1,190	1,289
Missouri	57,988	57,824	58,418	60,802	61,752
<b>Graduates taking ACT (%)</b>					
Lee's Summit R-7	70.4	71.6	68.7	72.5	68.6
Missouri	69	70	70	70	70
<b>Graduates scoring at or above U.S. average (<i>n</i>)</b>					
Lee's Summit R-7	486	568	531	595	644
Missouri	19,192	19,506	19,660	20,887	21,649
<b>Graduates scoring at or above U.S. average (%)</b>					
Lee's Summit R-7	47.7	53.7	47.1	50.0	50.0
Missouri	33.1	33.7	33.7	34.4	35.2
<b>Composite ACT score (average score out of 35 possible)</b>					
Lee's Summit R-7	22.4	23.1	22.7	23.0	22.9
Missouri	21.5	21.6	21.6	21.6	21.6

*Note.* From "Annual Report of School Data Educational Performance Data," 2008, by Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, at <http://dese.mo.gov/planning/profile/DR048071.html>

Table 2

*Graduation Rates 2008: Lee's Summit R-7 and Missouri*

	Lee's Summit R-7	Missouri
Total Graduates ( <i>N</i> )	1,289	61,752
Cohort Dropouts	90	10,715
Graduation Rate (%)	93.5	85.2
Asian Graduates( <i>n</i> )	34	1,025
Cohort Asian Dropouts	1	87
Asian Graduation Rate (%)	97.1	92.2
Black( <i>n</i> )	141	9,200
Cohort Black Dropouts	12	3,534
Black Graduation Rate (%)	92.2	72.2
American Indian Graduates ( <i>n</i> )	3	272
Cohort American Indian Dropouts	0	54
American Indian Graduation Rate (%)	100	83.4
Hispanic Graduates ( <i>n</i> )	39	1,498
Cohort Hispanic Dropouts	6	436
Hispanic Graduation Rate (%)	86.7	77.5
White Graduates ( <i>n</i> )	1,072	49,757
Cohort White Dropouts	71	6,604
White Graduation Rate (%)	93.8	88.3

*Note.* From "Annual Report of School Data Educational Performance Data," 2008, by Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, at <http://dese.mo.gov/planning/profile/DR048071.html>

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine how student perceptions were affected by participation in transition activities. Little research exists about the impact on students of transition to a new educational setting and on the potential of transition programs to assist ninth grade students and their families with the move from middle school to high school (Smith, 2006). In an effort to address the anxieties and problems facing ninth grade students, the current study examined student perceptions associated with academic, social, and organizational concerns related to transition from middle school to high school.

### Delimitations

The study was delimited to middle to high school informal transition activities and the student advisory program in the Lee's Summit School District. The study was delimited to student perceptions (class of 2012) of anticipation of and apprehension about entering high school.

### Assumptions

Assumptions made for the study included that respondents from the class of 2012 were representative of the total population of ninth grade students in the Lee's Summit School District, and that responses received from all of the participating students accurately reflected their honest perceptions. Based on the premise and knowledge that people remember events experienced, it was assumed that ninth grade students could accurately remember their perceptions of transition activities in which they were engaged 3 months prior to survey administration. Perceptions of students in the targeted district about middle to high school transitions programs and activities are assumed valid

measures of whether transition programs and activities effectively meet student needs and whether the perceptions might suggest a more comprehensive support system.

### Research Questions

The current research was guided by the following six questions.

1. Were survey responses about anticipation of the academic aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?
2. Were survey responses about anticipation of the social aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?
3. Were survey responses about anticipation of the organizational aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?
4. Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the academic aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?
5. Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the social aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?
6. Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the organizational aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?



## Definitions of Terms

*Achievement.* A summary of cognitive measures of what a student has learned because of many units or months of work (Guida, Ludlow, & Wilson, 1985). Gains in the Lee's Summit District ACT scores, graduation rates, and retention rates were viewed and discussed as measures of achievement for the purpose of this study of the targeted school district.

*Advisory/Mentor program.* Facilitates a relationship among student, parents, and teachers while providing academic support, career exploration, and opportunities to enhance and develop a positive sense of belonging for students throughout their high school tenure (Lee's Summit, 2007).

*Connecting Each Student to the Future (CESTTF).* A seamless, comprehensive K-12 Career Connections system, which embraces all components of career education including career pathways and prepares all students for their future (Lee's Summit, 2009).

*Dropout rate.* The high school dropout rate as established by the Missouri State Department of Education is the number of dropouts divided by September enrollment, plus transfers in, minus transfers out, minus dropouts, added to total September enrollment, then divided by two (DESE, 2007).

*Eighth grade counselor visits.* Counselors from the feeder high schools visit eighth grade students to communicate the ninth grade high school program of studies, scheduling, and extra-curricular activities (Lee's Summit, 2007).

*Eighth grade parent night/orientation meeting.* An evening meeting held at the middle school for the parents of outgoing eighth grade students or incoming ninth grade

students to learn about the curriculum, scheduling, and extra-curricular activities of the high school (Lee's Summit, 2007).

*Eighth grade spring enrollment conferences.* Mandatory conferences that include options for make-up sessions designed to assist parents and students in gaining a better understanding of the high school program and available opportunities for participation (Lee's Summit, 2007).

*Freshmen transition/club day.* A one-day orientation designed to assist freshmen with the transition from middle school to high school. The transition is conducted prior to the opening of the official school year (Lee's Summit, 2007).

*High school.* For the purpose of this study, high school in the Lee's Summit School District is composed of grades nine through twelve (Lee's Summit, 2007).

*Middle school.* For the purpose of this study, middle school in the Lee's Summit School District is composed of grades seven and eight (Lee's Summit, 2007).

*Middle to high school transition.* A process during which institutional and social factors influence whether students' educational careers are affected positively or negatively by the movement between organizations (Schiller, 1999).

*Retention rate.* The percentage of students who earn enough credits to be classified as a sophomore by the end of their ninth grade school year (DESE, 2007).

### Overview of Methods

The current study employed a survey research design. With parent permission, students in the class of 2012 took the Perceptions of Transition Survey (see Appendix A) two times, once in March 2008 as eighth graders and again in October 2008 as ninth graders. The eighth grade students, the class of 2012 in the Lee's Summit School

District's three middle schools, comprised the test group ( $N = 1380$ ). The class of 2012 engaged in several transition activities during the second semester in March of their eighth grade year and during the first semester in October of their ninth grade year.

Specific transition activities were eighth grade counselor visits, eighth grade parent night and orientation meeting, and a mandatory eighth grade enrollment conference. In addition, specific ninth grade transition activities were freshmen orientation-club day and an advisory program. The advisory program, a year-long twice-a-week program for ninth grade students, facilitates a relationship among student, parents, and teachers while providing academic support, career exploration, and opportunities to enhance and develop a positive sense of belonging for students throughout their high school term. The advisory program seeks to provide students with sustained support throughout their high school academic program, serves as the district's hallmark transition activity, and provides the most continuous support among the district's transition activities (Lee's Summit, 2007).

To assess the effectiveness of the advisement program and other transition activities, the Perceptions of Transition Survey was administered. The Perceptions of Transition Survey consists of 35 items that prompt participants to reflect on their transition to high school. Each item uses a 4-point Likert-type response format ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*. The survey contains common subscales measuring the extent of student anticipation, or looking forward to, and apprehension, or worrying about, academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school. The first administration of the survey (pre-survey) occurred after the completion of the eighth grade transition activities. The test group took the Perceptions of Transition Survey a

second time (post-survey) after the completion of the ninth grade transition activities. A record of attendance using the student number was maintained to ensure only students taking the eighth grade pre-survey would take the ninth grade post-survey.

The researcher calculated statistics for each pretest and posttest item related to academic, social, and organizational aspects on the Anticipation and Apprehension subscales. A paired samples *t* test was utilized to examine each hypothesis to determine if all, some, or none of the items had an effect on anticipation or apprehension. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was utilized to calculate the statistics, perform a paired samples *t* test, and relate the findings of the study. A narrative explanation of the results accompanies the statistical tests and findings in Chapter Four.

#### Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One contains the introduction and background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, overview of methodology, research questions, delimitations, and definitions of key terms used in the study. Four topics are researched and reviewed in Chapter Two: (a) academic, social, and organizational concerns of students in transitioning to high school; (b) the impact of dropping out of school; (c) suggestions for what schools can do to ease transition, with specific examples and the components of an effective transition program; and (d) specifically designed activities to promote success for students during their ninth grade year. Chapter Three discusses the methodology for the study, including the process for data collection, the sample size for the study, instruments used, and the methodology of data analysis. Chapter Four presents the results and findings for the study related to

perceptions of students. Chapter Five outlines interpretations and recommendations for future studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

As American students move from middle school to high school, transition activities, personal experiences, and student perceptions create concerns for the students, parents, and educators. Educational literature consistently suggests that many students struggle with the transition from one educational level to the next. Even a rapid view of U.S. statistics leaves no doubt that the challenges faced by students, parents, and educators are indicative of a daunting national educational crisis. According to Alliance for Excellent Education, “Each day in the United States, 3000 secondary school students leave school without a diploma, and 25% of all secondary school students are at risk of dropping out” (2003, p. 1). Transition activities are employed in American high schools in an effort to reverse the alarming trend of students choosing to leave high school prior to graduation.

Currently, little research examines the impact of transition on students and families. In addition, there is a scarcity of research regarding the potential of programs to assist these students in a seamless transition from middle school to high school. While movement from middle school to high school can be an exciting time for students, the transition is also filled with a tremendous amount of anxiety and stress for many adolescents (Hertzog & Morgan, 1997).

General areas of concern and the psychological effects on students resulting from academic, social, and organizational issues during middle to high school transition have raised questions among scholars in the field of education about the efficacy of existing

transition programs and the apparent lack of widespread implementation programs. Such questions have prompted efforts to promote the development of guidelines and programs designed to enhance a smooth transition process. Chapter Two presents discussion of four topics. The chapter opens with the topic of academic, social, and organizational concerns of students in transitioning to high school. Next, the impact of dropping out is addressed, and suggestions for what schools can do to ease transition are presented. Specifically designed activities to promote success for students during their ninth grade year conclude the chapter.

### Transition Concerns

The concerns raised relating to issues of transition that arise during students' movement to a new educational level are disturbing. A study by Mitman and Packer in 1982 ignited both low- and high-level concerns about transition, which continue today. In 2004, Haney et al., the National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy, issued a report entitled, "The Education Pipeline in the United States 1970-2000," which suggest that a major leak in the "pipeline" occurs during the ninth grade year. The report depicted significant increases in the numbers of students who were retained or who dropped out of school at the end of their freshman year.

Barone et al. (1991, p. 218) maintained, "As young adolescents make the transition into high school, many experience a decline in grades and attendance which often persists throughout the ninth grade year." Hertzog, Morgan, Diamond, and Walker (1996, as cited in Mizelle & Irvin, 2000, p. 1) noted, "They view themselves more negatively and experience an increased need for friendships, and, by the end of tenth grade, as many as 6% drop out of school." "For middle school students, including those

who have been labeled ‘gifted’ or ‘high achieving,’ the transition into high school can be an unpleasant experience and may result in or lead to negative emotional and physical impacts on learning” (Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994, p. 441). Students who struggle with transition encounter worry and uncertainty about each segment of daily life in a high school. Akos and Glassi (2004) stated,

While academic and social concerns in transition studies have been identified as primary, concerns related to getting lost, older students and bullies, too much homework, school rules, making friends, and unfamiliarity with lockers continue to be mentioned frequently as substantial student concerns. (p. 1)

Additional research suggests young adolescents transitioning to a new educational setting also worry about getting lunch and having enough time to eat; undressing in front of others; meeting students of the opposite sex; and having mean, uncaring teachers (Barone et al., 1991; Eccles, Midgley, & Adler, 1984; Mizelle, 1995; Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). According to Elias (2001a), worry about losing books; being referred for discipline, experiencing peer pressure to drink or smoke, developing a sense of belonging, going to the restroom, and being viewed as different are among the concerns that promote student apprehension.

Weldy (1991) noted that a study of student reflections offered insights about concerns of students in Gwinnett County, Georgia, as they moved to a new school. The students specifically referenced reporting to class on time, navigating crowded hallways, and remembering their bus number at the end of the day as sources of enormous worry. Students’ apprehensions about their personal safety at school where they might encounter



conflict and hostility were revealed as significant transition concerns in these studies (Anderman & Kimweli, 1997; Arowosafe-Schumacher & Irvin, 1992).

Brown and Armstrong (1982) reported teacher perceptions about a transition period varied from student perceptions. Elementary and middle school teachers worried they had not adequately prepared students in math and reading for the new educational setting with its more comprehensive, rigorous courses. Research by Weldy (1991) revealed that teachers have an extensive list of situations that challenge students who make the transition to a new educational setting. Teachers suggested that additional stressors would result from social issues that stem from varied maturity levels, adolescent physical development, and reduced parent involvement with students' school lives.

In addition to studies related to student and teacher concerns, some studies found relationships with relatives and friends served to promote as well as inhibit the transition from middle school to high school. Arowosafe-Schumacher and Irvin (1992) substantiated examples of parents, brothers, sisters, and peers who regularly conveyed warnings of danger and exaggerated incidents pertaining to confrontations leading to the exchange of blows and to violence in general. Parent worries about safety, the inability to "Just say no" to drug and alcohol use, coping with new teachers, and the physical, mental, and emotional changes of their students' bodies and attitudes were reported as similar to student worries (Epstein, 1995; MacIver, 1990; Paulson, 1994). Akos (2002) reported that students experiencing negative peer pressure in both academic and social areas had parents who expressed similar concerns.

The role and task of parents in assisting their children during the transition from middle school to high school is critical to student success. Falbo et al. (2001) noted

parents who observed, guided, and interceded in their children's school activities provided better opportunities for their children to have a smooth transition to the new educational setting. Feuerstein (2000) showed that enhanced contact between school and parent generally resulted in returned parent contact which cultivated communication between schools and families. Help from parents, friends, and teachers has been shown to be effective in guiding students through the transition. The amount of time adolescents spend with their parents prior to and during transition serves to teach and motivate students as well as to shape students' social world.

#### Social Concerns

Many of the perceptions and transition concerns related to student anxieties and apprehensions can be characterized as social concerns. A review of the literature related to student educational, psychological, and sociological aspects identifies and supports social concerns as being the primary area for ninth graders entering the new high school environment. Diemert (1992) stated that satisfying the social needs of students during the transition from middle school to high school is a huge endeavor since many programs place major emphasis on scholastics and overall rules.

Kinney (1993) found the expanded social experiences at the high school level provided positive and refreshing chances for students who had frequently experienced rejection and isolation in the middle school. In addition, an exceedingly differentiated social scene based on a larger number and a greater variety of groups and students characterized the high school experience. The study suggested that, as they enter high school, students were able to establish new social networks or groups that did not exist in their previous middle schools.

McGee, Ward, Gibbons, and Harlow (2003) provided support for the research of Midgley and Maehr (2000). The McGee et al. study elaborated on the importance of attention to social adjustment as well as academic issues, and described transition from middle to high school as a critical time for adolescents. Midgley and Maehr articulated concern that staff members in many high schools—feeling pressure to focus on high academic standards—fail to recognize the consequences encountered from the social side of high school and the impact of these social concerns on student learning. The researchers described the situation as a significant lack of foresight when groups such as parents and teachers unwittingly pit social relationships against the academic dimension.

Friendships and social interactions are most meaningful for adolescents. Akos (2002) stated, “The peer group was determined as the primary influence which young adolescents perceived as most helpful to them in making the transition. Assistance from parents and teachers reportedly appeared secondary” (p. 343). Elias (2001b) reported that, while new opportunities for friendships assist students in their quest to find a peer group, the task of making new friends and the confusion surrounding the emerging feelings for the opposite sex inhibits some young people. As a result, some adolescents align themselves with a peer group that encourages drinking, drugs, or alcohol. Elias concluded that students must be taught socially acceptable survival skills in order to meet their social needs successfully. During this time when peer groups are such a strong influence, it is necessary to provide extra guidance and support.

It is easy to note that the social aspects of student peer groups and their personalities are often more important to students than their academic success. This explains why it is common to see students "play dumb," trading off success in the

classroom for peer approval (Elias, 2001a). For Black students, the trade-off is even more challenging, as Kunjufu (1988) discussed in his book, *To Be Popular or Smart*.

Sometimes, the Black students purposefully rejected academic success in order to avoid being labeled “White” by their peers. Academically talented Black students often want to maintain their status with their peer group and may camouflage intellectual capabilities. The need to maintain ethnic identity in a perceived racially hostile environment is often viewed by talented black students as more important than academic success. Changes designed to reduce transitioning students’ educational, developmental, psychological, and social concerns related to their need to rely on the peer group can be realized through a school’s organizational framework.

#### Organizational Concerns

The transition from middle school to high school includes changes in the learning community related to various organizational issues. Differences in organizational structure, pedagogical approaches, and support systems have major implications for how students experience transition to high school (Smith & Lim, 2007). However, some components of the transition from middle school to high school appeal to many adolescents (Akos, 2002). Odegaard and Heath (1992) suggested, “The most appealing aspects incorporate encountering new peers, expanded freedoms, and the possession of an individual locker” (p. 21). The Akos study reported likewise that students described significant positive impact from various organizational situations in their new school experience, such as having various teachers for different subjects, switching classrooms, dining in the lunchroom, and finding opportunities to encounter new friends while engaging in various extra-curricular sports and activities (2002).

Other aspects of a new school environment create stress for transitioning students. Elias (2001b) asserted the primary problem faced by new middle school and high school students related to the unfamiliar environment. Getting lost, followed by difficulties in locating and opening lockers and bringing the correct materials to the right class at the right time were considerable issues for students. Most students survive the transition from middle to high school; however, coping with increased travel distances, larger cafeteria facilities, and loss of privacy in communal locker rooms causes as many as 25% to fail to thrive during this period. Smith's study suggested middle and high school faculty and administrators should work to provide programs and experiences to help familiarize students with the various similarities and differences in academic, social, and organizational structures of middle and high school settings (Smith, 2006).

One interesting suggestion for easing the transition between grade levels is the reorganization of middle and high schools into smaller schools. Riddle (2007) cited United States Secretary of Education Richard Riley, who reflected on ideas contained in "*Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*" during his September 1999 annual Back-to-School address. The Secretary recommended that "high schools and administrators consider creating smaller, more personal learning communities and environments for students where they will be less likely to slip through the cracks" (p. 1).

Secretary Riley also suggested that secondary schools (9-12) could better meet the needs of younger students with the small learning community concept. Riddle suggested the support found in the small learning communities could reduce stresses and poor choices that might lead to the lack of success plaguing some students today. The Secretary's report ignited a national dialogue that challenged and encouraged legislators,

educators, and communities to reflect on the general organization of their schools. The primary focus was on revitalization and considerations related to transforming the traditional high school to create more opportunities for student success.

#### Academic and Dropout Concerns

The National Center for Education Statistics estimates between 25-35 % of students entering high school will not graduate (NCES, 2008). Many of the students making the transition from middle school to high school are not well prepared for the academic demands of high school. Elias (2001a) suggested students need direct instruction, coaching, and support with regard to time management, basic study skills, homework, and other academic concepts that are more challenging. Expectations from multiple teachers in different subject areas can create problems for new high school students.

Riley (1999, as cited in Riddle, 2007) communicated with various high school administrators, who acknowledged and expressed the concern that, due to the size of their schools, failure to intervene effectively and retain students prior to disengagement would result in some students ultimately dropping out. As young adolescents make the transition into high school, many experience a decline in grades and attendance (Barone et al., 1991); this achievement loss may represent the first time some students experience grades lower than A's (Alspaugh, 1998a, 1998b; Isakson & Jarvis, 1999). A study by Owings and Peng (1992) found that by the end of 10th grade, as many as 6% of high school students drop out of school.

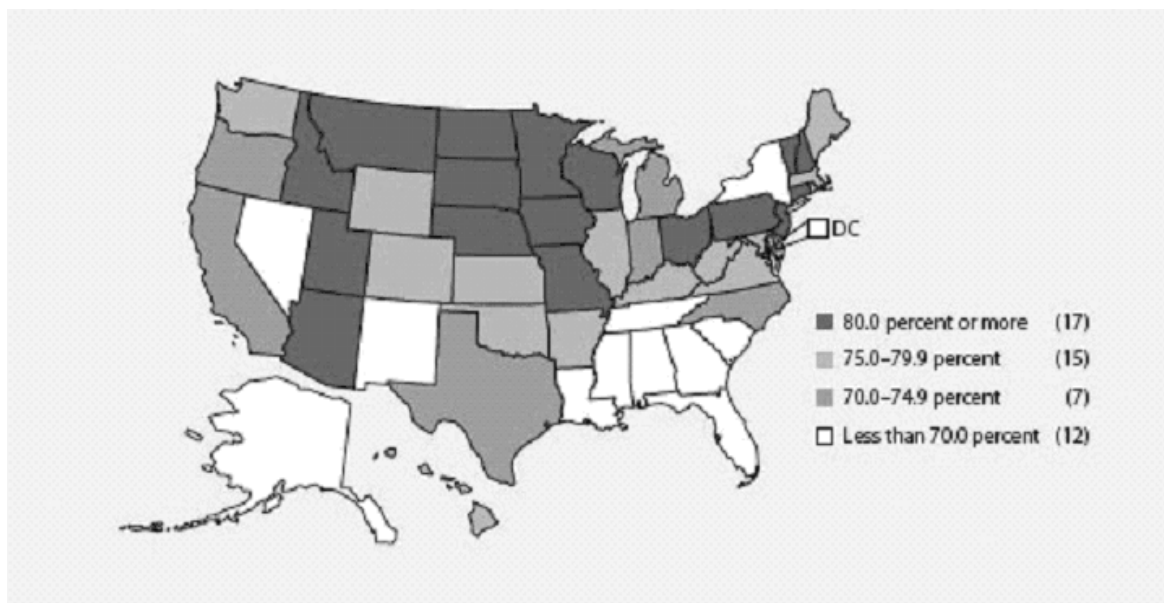
Alspaugh (2000) compared high school dropout rates for boys and girls in high schools with grade spans of 7-12, 9-12, and 10-12. Forty-five Missouri schools, 15 in

each grade span category, participated in the study. Higher dropout rates were recorded for boys than for girls. The difference between dropout rates of male and female students increased as the grade level of transition to high school increased. The highest dropout rates occurred in the grade span 10-12 high schools, where students make the transition to high school when they are approximately 16 years old. The lowest dropout rates were in school districts without intermediate level schools in which students make only one school-to-school transition from elementary to secondary school at seventh grade.

Morgan and Hertzog (2001) cited information from the National Center for Education Statistics indicating that transition is beginning to gain attention because ninth grade course failures and school dropout rates exceed all other grade levels. Increased disengagement and declining motivation predict subsequent school dropout. The national graduation rate is estimated by some to be 68%, with nearly one third of all public high school students failing to graduate (Swanson, 2004). Approximately 40 to 50% of high schools in the 35 largest central cities in the United States graduate less than half of their ninth grade class in 4 years (Balfanz & Legters, 2004). Figure 1 depicts average freshman graduation rates of public high school students by state for the 2004-05 school year.

The Southern Regional Educational Board reported, “The failure rate in grade nine is three to five times higher than that of any other grade” (2002, p. 24). Haney et al. (2004) found, “The rate at which students disappear between grades 9 and 10 has tripled over the last 30 years” and called this, “Clearly, the largest leak in the education pipeline” (2004, p. 10). In addition, results from Haney et al. indicated the grade 9 graduation rates had declined steadily since the early 1990s, and currently, 70 to 80% of students who are retained in the ninth grade will not graduate from high school. A review of 2005 dropout

rates in the United States as related to race and ethnicity is daunting, particularly for Black and Hispanic groups. Table 3 presents the percentage of high school dropouts among 16-24 years old by race and ethnicity.



*Figure 1.* Averaged freshman graduation rates of public high school students, by state, school year 2004–05.

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*Note.* From *The Condition of Education 2008*, 2008, by U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2008charts/chart21.asp?popup=true>

Neild, Stoner-Eby, and Furstenberg (2001) highlighted a theme found throughout much of the research when they stated, “Researchers now generally agree that dropping out is the culmination of progressive disengagement with the academic and/or social dimensions of schooling” (p. 61). Neild et al. collected data on multiple factors that might affect dropout rates. They found a positive correlation between the experiences in grade 9



and the probability of dropping out, despite controls for demographic and family background characteristics and student behaviors and academic success in middle school (2001, p. 291).

Table 3

*High School Dropouts Rates Among Persons 16 to 24 Years Old, by Race/Ethnicity*

Year	Total	Race/Ethnicity		
		White	Black	Hispanic
2004	10.3%	6.8%	11.8%	23.8%
2005	9.4%	6.0%	10.4%	22.4%
2006	9.3%	5.8%	10.7%	22.1%

*Note.* From *The Condition of Education 2008*, 2008, by U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (Chart No. NCES 2008-031).

### What Schools Can Do To Ease Transition

School administrators and faculties must consider some form of intervention before students become disengaged and ultimately disappear from the school system. As students transition to a new school environment, they face challenges that can be highly disturbing, especially if the students become unmotivated by school or have a difficult time establishing a new sense of belonging. Much of the research supports the premise that transition programs are helpful in reducing high school dropout rates, especially when combined with other interventions.

Schools must keep students focused toward an on-time graduation (Roderick & Camburn, 1999). The American Association of School Administrators suggested several steps to keep all students moving through the education pipeline (Wheelock & Miao, 2005). Steps include collecting data to guide school improvement, making increased graduation rates a part of the district mission, restructuring grade 9 to incorporate support services, and revising district policies that may result in student disengagement from school.

Regular attendance and a learning environment free of disruptive behavior are essential to student success. Yet, natural consequences related to the applications of rigid attendance and discipline policies are often detrimental to students already at risk of failing and ultimately dropping out of school. According to Wheelock and Miao (2005), schools should consider attendance incentive policies that allow students to remove absences in exchange for a predetermined number of days of regular or uninterrupted attendance. Suspensions for minor infractions promote lost learning opportunities and further enhance disengagement. Implementing creative ways to negotiate attendance contracts, utilizing mediation to resolve conflict, and establishing programs of amends and restitution are starting points to reducing disengagement. All these steps are designed to strengthen the transition to and through high school.

An examination of the research reveals that transition programs such as those recommended by the American Association of School Administrators realize far greater benefits for all the stakeholders when they reach out to students on many levels: emotional, social, and academic. MacIver (1990) found that when middle school students took part in a high school transition program with several diverse articulation activities,

fewer students were retained in the transition grade. Middle school principals interviewed during the MacIver study indicated they expected fewer of their students to drop out before graduation when the school provided supportive advisory group activities or responsive remediation programs (MacIver & Epstein, 1991).

Smith (1997) reported students performed better in high school when provided with complete and extensive transition programs. Students who experienced the more comprehensive transition programs were less likely to drop out than students who experienced less comprehensive or no transition programs. The Smith study emphasized the importance for transition programs to include students, parents, and teachers as stakeholders. Transition programs and activities limited in scope and targeted population were perceived as a waste of time.

Hertzog and Morgan's (1998) study conducted in Georgia and Florida supported Smith's (1997) findings and indicated the more extensive transition programs produced lower dropout and higher retention rates of ninth grade students. Mizelle and Irvin (2000, p. 58) concluded, "Schools with extensive transition programs have significantly lower failure and dropout rates than schools that provide students fewer articulation activities." Schools that implemented few transition strategies, such as school tours and counselor visits, had the highest dropout and retention rates.

Effective transition programs create for students and families a backdrop densely populated with caring adults and provide an abundance of information comparing and contrasting the academic, social, and organizational aspects of middle and high school (Mizelle, 1999). Zeedyk, Gallacher, Henderson, Husband, and Lindsay (2003) suggested several actions that would enhance the transition process: include more visitation days

between schools, allow students to spend a day with older students, invite high school students and teachers to speak at the feeder schools, and provide mentoring to middle school students by their high school counterparts. Lena Morgan, co-chair of the Center for Transition Studies at Augusta State University, and Paulson (1994) concurred with the Zeedyk et al. study.

Cognato's (1999) Big Sister/Brother Program (as cited in Mizelle, 1999), found evidence that students who had multiple interactions with older students had less decline in grades and fewer absences. Older and younger students connected through a spring social event, letter writing programs, meetings, and picnics during the eighth and ninth grade years. Eighth graders shadowing ninth graders, a buddy program, and meetings with ninth grade students demystified the high school experience as well (Mizelle, 1999).

MacIver's (1990) report posited that school officials identified multi-faceted transition programs as most successful. The programs establish connections among students, parents, and faculty by (a) providing students and parents with information about the new school, (b) offering structure within the school community for students, and (c) providing time for the middle school and high school faculties to review each other's curriculum and requirements.

Activities that bring middle and high school educators together are vital if transition programs are to be successful. The activities involving educators, however, are often overlooked and are rarely incorporated in the transition process. Effective transition programs must involve collaboration between staffs from both schools (Mizelle, 1999). Middle school educators want to prepare students for the next steps in their education. It is imperative for middle school educators to know curriculum requirements at the next

level and to learn the philosophy and culture of the schools to which they will send their students. Mizelle indicated ideally, input from parents and students can be equally important when developing a transition program.

All successful transition programs have many stakeholders: students, parents, teachers, administrators, and district patrons. These groups work together to achieve and refine the elements that ultimately define their school. Effective middle and high school transition programs validate all the participants, respond appropriately to concerns from incoming students, and allow multiple occasions for all the stakeholders to participate in the transition process (Arowosafe-Schumacher, 1998).

#### Summary

Transition programs and activities designed to inspire, motivate, and support instruction and interaction between students, teachers, and parents should be significant, extensive and ongoing for students to experience success. According to Belcher and Hatley (1994),

Providing young adolescents with activities that relate directly to their transition into high school is important; however, providing young adolescents with a challenging and supportive transition experience is an equally important factor in their making a successful transition into high school. (p. 75)

Smith concurred with this statement but added that transition programs and activities limited in scope and targeted population are usually perceived as a waste of time (1997). The existing research has established the positive effect that transition programs have on all stakeholders: students, parents, and educators. Schools may realize strong gains in student success rates by implementing programs that students and their

parents perceive as useful in the transition process. Chapter Three discusses the research design and methodology for this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

Little research has been done regarding the impact on students of movement to a new educational setting and potential programs to assist students in a seamless transition from middle to high school (Smith, 2006). Research of these topics is imperative to increase the knowledge base for parents and educators of students who are at risk of academic failure as they move to high schools. Chapter Three highlights the research methodology and procedures used in the study. The sections included in this chapter are the purpose of the study, research questions, research design, study population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, and limitations of the study.

#### Purpose of the Study

Presently, eighth and ninth grade students and their parents in the target school district are exposed to the following transition activities: eighth grade counselor visits, eighth grade parent night/orientation meeting, mandatory eighth grade enrollment conferences, freshmen transition/club day, and advisory/mentor programs. The purpose of this study was to use the Lee's Summit High School class of 2012 in order to evaluate how student perceptions were affected by participation in transition activities from middle school to high school. The perceptions of eighth and ninth grade students were examined using the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The Perceptions of Transition Survey, which was designed to analyze student perceptions of transition, related to anticipation and apprehension associated with the academic, social, and organizational

aspects of high school. Analysis of the data yielded from the Perceptions of Transition Survey is expected to assist Lee's Summit School District counselors and administrators in developing proactive interventions designed to promote student success and minimize problems during transition.

### Research Design

This quantitative research project used a survey approach to study and evaluate students' anticipation of and apprehension about various aspects of high school as reflected by their responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The study specifically analyzed the Lee's Summit class of 2012 student responses related to anticipation of and apprehension regarding aspects of high school associated with academic, social, and organizational transition issues. The survey research design method was selected because the study required collection of information about students' beliefs, attitudes, interest, and/or behavior through questions associated with middle to high school transitions. A pretest and posttest was administered to each student.

The following collected survey information represents one example each of a belief, attitude, interest and/or behavior item associated with the survey: belief (e.g., freedom to choose academic plan); attitude (e.g., getting along with other students); interest (e.g., participating in extra-curricular activities); and behavior (e.g., new rules). Another component of the survey, not analyzed in the current study, asked students to respond to how they felt about the following items: belief (e.g., excellent work is expected of me); attitude (e.g., I don't care what tests say about my intelligence); interest (e.g., I like coming to school); and behavior (e.g., I behave well in school).



### Study Variables

One dependent variable and one independent variable comprised the study variables for this project. The dependent variable in the study was the effect of the school district transition activities as measured by the difference in student responses from the pretest and posttest results on the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The dependent variable was measured from the following perspectives: (a) anticipation of and (b) apprehension about academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school. The independent variable was the test time before and after the district-wide transition activities.

### Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of 1380 students from the Lee's Summit High School class of 2012. Students transitioned from one of the district's three feeder middle schools (Campbell, Pleasant Lea, and Summit Lakes) to one of the district's three receiving high schools (Lee's Summit, Lee's Summit North, and Lee's Summit West). Each high school contained approximately 1700 students. Demographics of ethnicity and gender for the student population are presented in Table 4. The students who took the survey were a subset of this population.

### Sampling Procedures

Students in the study were not individually solicited or contacted. All students were not required to participate in the study. The study used a volunteer sampling procedure. This procedure was utilized based on participants' expression of willingness to participate in the study (Gall et al., 2005).

Table 4

*Post-Survey Lee's Summit Student Demographics*

Ethnic Group	Asian	Black, Not Hispanic	Hispanic	Native Am./Alaskan	White, Not Hispanic	Total
<b>High School</b>						
Female	3	24	7	2	206	242
Male	3	26	8	0	178	215
Subtotal	6	50	15	2	384	457
<b>North High School</b>						
Female	1	32	8	5	198	244
Male	4	22	13	0	181	220
Subtotal	5	54	21	5	379	464
<b>West High School</b>						
Female	6	27	6	0	181	220
Male	3	27	8	0	201	239
Subtotal	9	54	14	0	382	459
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1145</b>	<b>1380</b>

*Note.* From "District Information," Lee's Summit School District, 2008. Available at

<http://www.leesummit.k12.mo.us/pdf/publications.pdf>

## Instrumentation

The Perceptions of Transition Survey was developed from the research of Akos and Glassi (2004). The original instrument, the School Transition Questionnaire (STQ), assessed a variety of information about student perceptions and transitions, including (a) students' overall feelings about the difficulty of transition, (b) students' sense of connectedness to a new school, and (c) persons who were most helpful to students during their transition. The STQ instrument included a checklist format of approximately 35 items as well as a series of open-ended, short-answer questions for parents and teachers. The items were adapted from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (1998), a study undertaken in response to a mandate by the U.S. Congress in the NIH Revitalization Act of 1993.

Smith (2006) revised the original STQ instrument and developed the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The revised survey, used in the current study, consisted of the 35 items that prompt students to reflect on their transition to high school. In Smith's revised survey, each item is worded to use a 4-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 indicating *strongly disagree* to 4 indicating *strongly agree*. The survey contained three major subscales: Anticipation, Apprehension, and Helper. The Anticipation and Apprehension subscales that were used in the current research elicited students' responses associated with their perceptions of positive and negative concerns related to aspects of high school. The Helper subscale elicited students' responses associated with their perceptions of whom they found provided the most assistance as related to aspects of transition to high school.

The survey items were categorized according to the three areas of academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school. Phrases relating to the Anticipation subscale included academic items (e.g., freedom to choose academic plan and taking classes in new subjects), social items (e.g., making new friends and participating in extracurricular activities), and organizational items (e.g., being in a larger school and having more choices for lunch). Phrases on the Apprehension subscale included academic items (e.g., too much homework and difficult classes), social items (e.g., fitting in and being bullied), and organizational items (e.g., getting lost and new rules). The Apprehension social questions related to being safe and accepted by others required a reverse analysis to obtain appropriate interpretation of the impact of transition activities. The Apprehension organizational question related to new rules required a reverse analysis to obtain appropriate interpretation of the impact of transition activities.

The final subscale of the survey (Helper), which was not reviewed in its entirety in the current study, required students to rate the perceived helpfulness of their eighth grade counselors, teachers, parents, and transition activities in assisting them prior to and after the transition to high school. Each item in this subscale was rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, indicating *not at all helpful*, to 4, indicating *very helpful*. This subscale did not fit in the scope of the study and did not address students' anticipation or apprehension about various aspects of high school. The Perceptions of Transition Survey in its entirety is included in the Appendix A.

### Validity and Reliability

This section of the study presents information regarding the validity and reliability of Smith's Perceptions of Transition Survey. There was no validity information

available for the survey. The alpha coefficients for the Perceptions of Transition Survey were .82 for the Anticipation questions and .94 for the questions about Apprehension. These coefficients indicated the two subscales were reliable (Smith, Feldwisch, & Abell, 2006).

### Data Collection Procedures

Data for this project were collected twice during the 2007-2008 school year. The data include the students' responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey after participation in middle school transition activities (pretest) in March 2008 and high school transition activities (posttest) in October 2008. Data were collected for the Perceptions of Transition Survey through the district Internet Web site. A Web address served as the source for creating and building the survey, opening the survey for data collection, and viewing and exporting survey results. The survey requested students to self-report their student number, age, gender, ethnicity, grades, and involvement in student activities. The researcher did not have access to information identifying any student in the study. The surveys identified students by number to ensure only students taking the pretest had taken the posttest. Utilization of the student number also assisted in the identification match necessary for the analysis using paired samples *t* tests.

The Perceptions of Transition online survey required students to have access to computers. All students in both the middle schools and high schools had access to the Internet. There were two all-school computer labs in each middle school building and three all-school computer labs in each high school building. Additionally, each school had two mobile carts and curriculum classrooms available for use.

Using library media center computer labs, mobile carts, and curriculum classrooms, students had access to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. Site technology specialists in each building placed a link on media center computers for easy direct access to the survey and online directions. History class teachers at each middle school and high school provided opportunities for students to complete the survey. History class teachers and online survey directions provided initial instruction for completing the survey. The first administration of the survey (pre-survey) occurred after the completion of the eighth grade transition activities in March 2008. The test group took the Perceptions of Transition Survey a second time (post-survey) after the completion of the ninth grade transition activities in fall, October 2008. Students had ample opportunity to complete the online survey. The pretest survey window at the middle school was March-May 2008. The posttest survey window at the high school was October-November 2008. Approximately 10-15 minutes were required to complete both the pretest and posttest of the Perceptions of Transition Survey.

#### Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Statistical values, which related mean, frequency, and standard deviation, were calculated for each pretest and posttest item related to academic, social, and organizational aspects on the Anticipation and Apprehension subscales. Each hypothesis was examined separately by a paired samples  $t$  test to determine if all, some, or none of the items had an effect on anticipation or apprehension. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was utilized to compare the average pretest and posttest survey subscale scores and perform the paired samples  $t$  test.

The current study was designed to answer the following six research questions and their subsequent alternative hypotheses:

1. Were survey responses about anticipation of the academic aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference in student anticipation of academic aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The areas addressed by the anticipation of the academic aspects of high school subscale were aligned with the following items: 2-Freedom to choose academic plan, 4-Freedom to choose some classes, 7-Taking classes in new subjects, 8-Having new teachers, and 10-Getting good grades.

2. Were survey responses about anticipation of the social aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant difference in student anticipation of social aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The areas addressed by the anticipation of the social aspects of high school subscale were aligned with the following items: 3-Being around more students, 5-Being around older students, 6-Making new friends, 9-Participating in extra-curricular activities, 11-Meeting new students, and 13-Attending school events.

3. Were survey responses about anticipation of the organizational aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant difference in student anticipation of organization aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The areas addressed by the anticipation of the organizational aspects of high school subscale were aligned with the following items: 1-Being in a larger school and 12-More choices for lunch.

4. Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the academic aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a negative difference in student apprehensions regarding academic aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The areas addressed by the apprehension about the academic aspects of high school subscale were aligned with the following items: 3-Parent pressure to do well in classes, 4-Peer pressure to do well in classes, 7-Difficult teachers, 10-Too much homework, 14-Teacher pressure to do well, and 15-Difficult classes.

5. Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the social aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?

H<sub>5</sub>: There is a negative difference in student apprehensions regarding social aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The areas addressed by the apprehension about the social aspects of high school subscale were aligned with the following items: 2-Getting along with other students, 5-Being bullied, 6-Fitting in, 8-Being safe, 11-Peer pressure to do things don't want to do, and 12-Accepted by other students.



6. Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the organizational aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?

H<sub>6</sub>: There is a negative difference in student apprehensions regarding organizational aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The areas addressed by the apprehension about the organizational aspects of high school subscale were aligned with the following items: 1-Finding way around, 9-New rules, and 13-Getting lost.

#### Limitations

The research project was not without limitations. First, a limitation to the study was that the target district's three middle schools, three high schools, and eighth/ninth grade students (class of 2012) were the only focus for the study. Secondly, data for the study was limited in information pertaining to implementation and transition interventions in the target district's middle and high schools. The study utilized a survey design in which the participants' pre-transition recollections could have been influenced either by post-transition experiences or by forgetting because students were surveyed in October, approximately 3 months after they had entered the ninth grade.

#### Summary

In Chapter Three, the researcher outlined the design of the study, focusing on the broad areas of the sources of the data, the instruments and procedures of the data collection, and the statistical procedures used for the study. Chapter Four includes the presentation and analysis of the data collected through the process described in this

chapter. The results provided the information necessary to evaluate student perceptions of transition from middle to high school and the effect on student and school success.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of ninth grade students regarding the effectiveness of middle to high school transition activities as reflected by their responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. More specifically, the study was designed to determine how transition activities may have affected students' perceptions of the academic, social, and organizational aspects as well as their anticipation for and apprehension about aspects of high school. This chapter provides results of statistical analysis, including statistics and paired sample *t* tests that were used to test each of the six hypotheses. Included in the reporting is a decision to retain or reject each of the six hypotheses. A brief presentation and summary of the findings are included.

#### Setting

A survey research design was used in the study to compare a group of students on the Perceptions of Transition Survey at two times during the study: once following eighth grade transition activities and again following ninth grade transition activities. The eighth grade students (class of 2012) in the Lee's Summit School District's three middle schools comprised the test group ( $N = 1380$ ). Students and their parents experienced the following transition activities: eighth grade counselor visits (students only), eighth grade parent night and orientation meeting (parents only), a mandatory eighth grade enrollment conference (students and parents), freshmen orientation-club day (students), and an on-going advisory program (students). The dependent variable was the effect of these school district transition activities as measured by the difference in student responses from the

pretest/first administration and posttest/second administration results on the Perceptions of Transition Survey.

### Data Analysis

The pretest sample consisted of 844 eighth grade students. At the conclusion of the eighth grade transition activities and at the beginning of the ninth grade year, all freshmen were administered the same survey in posttest format. There were 961 students in the posttest group. The posttest group was matched to the original population of students of the pretest group, providing a matched paired sample grouping of 495 students. Six students failed to answer a significantly acceptable number of questions within the returned surveys, and the original 495 pairs of data were reduced to 489. Three individual student numbers were identified as duplicated in the initial analysis of paired responses on the pretest. The duplication occurred as a result of students beginning, but not completing the pretest, possibly due to a lack of time. The student numbers were not duplicated on the posttest. The researcher matched one student number from the pretest to the posttest and eliminated the duplicate student number on the pretest. The researcher checked to make sure gender and age were aligned within the match; the individual pretest student number that did not align was eliminated. For instance, student number 1023542 appeared two times on the pretest and one time on the posttest. Data were examined for each of the two-pretest entries 1023542. The incomplete pretest entry was eliminated, leaving a matched complete pretest entry and a complete posttest entry for analysis. Table 5 presents eighth grade student and ninth grade student pretest elimination and posttest participation in the Perceptions of Transition Survey.

Table 5

*Pretest and Posttest Participation Class 2012, Perceptions of Transition Survey*

	Pretest	Posttest
Total	844	961
Teacher failure	0	125
Not in both	289	284
Missing ID no.	60	57
Incomplete/Other	6	6
	<i>N</i> = 489	<i>N</i> = 489

Teacher failure to adhere to the extended survey deadline on November 24, 2008, resulted in approximately 125 ninth grade students, out of 961, not participating in the posttest. These students may have accounted for some of the student numbers present in the pretest, but not in the posttest. The condition necessary for participants remaining in the sample was no more than 25% of their total responses missing on the survey pretest or posttest with matching student numbers from students in the class of 2012. A total of 355 pretest entries were not used in the analysis. Of those, 289 were not in both the pretest or posttest, 60 had missing ID information and 6 were incomplete. A total of 347 posttest entries were not used in the analysis. Of those, 284 were not in both the pretest or posttest, 57 were missing ID information and 6 were incomplete. This resulted in a total of 489 entries, which were used in the analysis.

The data were organized to compare the average pretest and posttest subscale scores of the students via paired samples *t* tests. The categories addressed by the survey

Anticipation and Apprehension subscales were associated with the academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school. Tables 6 through 11 present results of mean comparisons for the specific individual categories addressed by the 13 Anticipation and 15 Apprehension subscale items.

#### *Anticipation Academic Subscale*

The areas addressed by the Anticipation subscale and respective academic aspects of high school were aligned with the following questions and numbered items: 2-Freedom to choose academic plan; 4-Freedom to choose some classes, 7-Taking classes in new subjects, 8-Having new teachers, and 10-Getting good grades. Table 6 shows students' scores on the Anticipation academic subscale were higher on the posttest for all items. Students gave the highest posttest ratings for freedom to choose some classes ( $M = 3.623$ ), freedom to choose academic plan ( $M = 3.380$ ), and getting good grades ( $M = 3.236$ ).

#### *Anticipation Social Subscale*

The areas addressed by the Anticipation subscale and respective social aspects of high school were aligned with the following questions and numbered items: 3-Being around more students, 5-Being around older students, 6-Making new friends, 9-Participating in extra-curricular activities, 11-Meeting new students, and 13-Attending school events. Table 7 shows students' scores on the Anticipation social subscale were higher on the posttest for all related items, with the exception of participating in extra-curricular activities ( $M = 3.268$ ). Students gave the highest posttest ratings for making new friends ( $M = 3.508$ ) and attending school events ( $M = 3.339$ ).

Table 6

*Anticipation of Academic Aspects: Individual Survey Items Pre- and Post-Survey*

	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Item 2: Freedom to choose academic plan			
Pre-Survey	2.113	487	.815
Post-Survey	3.380	487	.603
Item 4: Freedom to choose some classes			
Pre-Survey	1.872	485	.739
Post-Survey	3.623	485	.522
Item 7: Taking classes in new subjects			
Pre-Survey	2.616	484	.871
Post-Survey	3.227	484	.598
Item 8: Having new teachers			
Pre-Survey	1.893	485	.806
Post-Survey	3.002	485	.644
Item 10: Getting good grades			
Pre-Survey	3.002	488	.905
Post-Survey	3.236	488	.644

Table 7

*Anticipation of Social Aspects: Individual Survey Items Pre- and Post-Survey*

		<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Item 3: Being around more students				
	Pre-Survey	3.191	487	.710
	Post-Survey	3.273	487	.692
Item 5: Being around older students				
	Pre-Survey	3.029	484	.747
	Post-Survey	3.262	484	.674
Item 6: Making new friends				
	Pre-Survey	3.473	484	.625
	Post-Survey	3.508	484	.577
Item 9: Participating in extra-curricular activities				
	Pre-Survey	3.436	486	.783
	Post-Survey	3.268	486	.870
Item 11: Meeting new students				
	Pre-Survey	3.258	485	.669
	Post-Survey	3.305	485	.604
Item 13: Attending school events				
	Pre-Survey	1.860	487	.965
	Post-Survey	3.339	487	.820



### *Anticipation Organizational Subscale*

The areas addressed by the Anticipation subscale and respective organization aspects of high school were aligned with the following questions and numbered items: 1-Being in larger school and 12-More choices for lunch. Table 8 shows students' scores on the Anticipation organizational subscale were higher on the posttest for being in a larger school ( $M = 3.221$ ) and lower on the posttest for more choices for lunch (3.111).

Table 8

#### *Anticipation of Organizational Aspects: Individual Survey Items Pre- and Post-Survey*

	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Item 1: Being in a larger school			
Pre-Survey	3.066	485	.721
Post-Survey	3.221	485	.639
Item 12: More choices for lunch			
Pre-Survey	3.520	485	.648
Post-Survey	3.111	485	.795

### *Apprehension Academic Subscale*

The areas addressed by the Apprehension subscale and respective academic aspects of high school were aligned with the following questions and numbered items: 3-Parent pressure to do well in classes; 4-Peer pressure to do well in classes, 7-Difficult teachers, 10-Too much homework, 14-Teacher pressure to do well, and 15-Difficult classes. Table 9 shows students' scores on the Apprehension academic subscale were

lower on the posttest for all items. Students gave the lowest ratings for peer pressure to do well in class ( $M = 1.688$ ) and teacher pressure to do well ( $M = 2.091$ ).

Table 9

*Apprehension of Academic Aspects: Individual Survey Items Pre- and Post-Survey*

	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Item 3: Parent pressure to do well in classes			
Pre-Survey	2.462	485	.999
Post-Survey	2.303	485	.882
Item 4: Peer pressure to do well in classes			
Pre-Survey	1.870	484	.738
Post-Survey	1.688	484	.675
Item 7: Difficult teachers			
Pre-Survey	2.612	485	.873
Post-Survey	2.307	485	.781
Item 10: Too much homework			
Pre-Survey	3.000	487	.905
Post-Survey	2.904	487	.849
Item 14: Teacher pressure to do well			
Pre-Survey	2.245	482	.837
Post-Survey	2.091	482	.712
Item 15: Difficult classes			
Pre-Survey	2.570	488	.878
Post-Survey	2.441	488	.734

### *Apprehension Social Subscale*

The areas addressed by the Apprehension subscale and respective social aspects of high school were aligned with the following questions and numbered items: 2-Getting along with other students, 5-Being bullied, 6-Fitting in, 8-Being safe, 11-Peer pressure to do things I don't want to do, and 12-Accepted by other students. Table 10 illustrates students' scores on the Apprehension social subscale were lower on the posttest for all items. Students gave the lowest ratings for being bullied ( $M = 1.678$ ) and fitting in ( $M = 1.697$ ). The question related to item 8-Being safe, phrased "I feel safe at school," generated the following mean scores: pre-test ( $M = 3.107$ ) and posttest ( $M = 1.915$ ), indicating a decrease in apprehension. The question related to Item 12-Accepted by others, phrased "I feel accepted by others," generated the following mean scores: pre-test ( $M = 2.918$ ) and posttest ( $M = 1.838$ ), indicating a decrease in apprehension. These two questions were reverse scored to obtain a correct interpretation of the impact of the difference between the pretest and post-test results of transition activities.

Table 10

*Apprehension of Social Aspects: Individual Survey Items Pre- and Post-Survey*

		<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Item 2: Getting along with older students				
	Pre-Survey	2.113	486	.818
	Post-Survey	1.710	486	.652
Item 5: Being bullied				
	Pre-Survey	1.768	488	.789
	Post-Survey	1.678	488	.734
Item 6: Fitting in				
	Pre-Survey	2.000	485	.850
	Post-Survey	1.697	485	.711
*Item 8: Being safe				
	*Pre-Survey	3.107	484	.807
	*Post-Survey	1.915	484	.659
Item 11: Peer pressure to do things don't want to do				
	Pre-Survey	2.134	485	.914
	Post-Survey	1.901	485	.673
*Item 12: Accepted by other students				
	*Pre-Survey	2.918	487	.840
	*Post-Survey	1.838	487	.635

*\*Reverse Scored*

### *Apprehension Organizational Aspects*

The areas addressed by the Apprehension subscale and respective organizational aspects of high school were aligned with the following questions and numbered items: 1-Finding way around, 9-New rules, and 13-Getting lost. Table 11 illustrates student scores on the Apprehension organizational subscale were lower on the posttest for all items. Students gave the lowest ratings for getting lost ( $M = 1.665$ ) and finding way around ( $M = 1.695$ ). The question related to Item 1-Finding way around, phrased “I have trouble finding my way around,” generated the following mean scores: pre-test ( $M = 2.641$ ) and posttest ( $M = 1.695$ ) indicating a decrease in apprehension. The question related to Item 9-New rules, phrased “I understand the new rules of high school,” generated the following mean scores: pre-test ( $M = 3.048$ ) and posttest ( $M=1.760$ ), indicating a decrease in apprehension. The question related to Item 13-Getting lost, phrased “I get lost in school,” generated the following mean scores: pre-test ( $M = 2.357$ ) and posttest ( $M = 1.665$ ), indicating a decrease in apprehension. The question related to Item 9-New rules was reverse scored to obtain a correct interpretation of the impact of the difference between the pretest and posttest results of transition activities.

Table 11

*Apprehension of Organizational Aspects: Individual Survey Items Pre- and Post-Survey*

	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Item 1: Finding way around			
Pre-Survey	2.641	485	.890
Post-Survey	1.695	485	.691
*Item 9: New rules			
*Pre-Survey	3.048	483	.770
*Post-Survey	1.760	483	.573
Item 13: Getting lost			
Pre-Survey	2.357	487	.927
Post-Survey	1.665	487	.673

*\*Reverse Scored*

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

Six research questions and their respective hypotheses were constructed for statistical examination using paired samples *t* tests.

Question 1: Were survey responses about anticipation of the academic aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities? To address the first research question, the following alternative hypothesis was tested.  $H_1$ : There is a significant difference in student anticipation of the academic aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that the alternative hypothesis is true.

There was a statistically significant difference in the survey scores on student anticipation of the academic aspects of high school ( $t = 28.76$ ,  $df = 473$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The post-transition activities mean ( $M = 3.290$ ) was significantly higher than the pre-transition activities mean ( $M = 2.306$ ). The mean difference was .983. Students reported higher anticipation of academic aspects of high school after the eighth and ninth grade transition activities.

Question 2: Were survey responses about anticipation of the social aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities? To address the second research question, the following alternative hypothesis was tested.  $H_2$ : There is a significant difference in scores in student anticipation of the social aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that the alternative hypothesis is true. There was a statistically significant difference in the survey scores on student anticipation of the social aspects of high school ( $t = 9.507$ ,  $df = 467$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The post-transition activities mean ( $M = 3.332$ ) was significantly higher than the pre-transition activities mean ( $M = 3.042$ ). The mean difference was .291. Students reported higher anticipation of social aspects of high school after the eighth and ninth grade transition activities.

Question 3: Were survey responses about anticipation of the organizational aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities? To address the third research question, the following alternative hypothesis was tested.  $H_3$ : There is a significant difference in student anticipation of the organizational aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The hypothesis was supported; therefore, there is a



significant difference, although the change was in the opposite direction from what was hypothesized. There was a statistically significant difference in the survey scores on student anticipation of the organizational aspects of high school ( $t = -3.095$ ,  $df = 480$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The post-transition activities mean ( $M = 3.166$ ) was significantly less than the pre-transition activities mean ( $M = 3.296$ ). The mean difference was  $-.130$ . Student anticipation of the organizational aspects of high school decreased after the eighth and ninth grade transition activities.

Question 4: Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the academic aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities? To address the fourth research question, the following alternative hypothesis was tested.  $H_4$ : There is a significant difference in scores on student apprehensions regarding the academic aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. There is significant evidence that the alternative hypothesis is true. There was a statistically significant decrease in the survey scores on student apprehension regarding the academic aspects of high school ( $t = -4.531$ ,  $df = 466$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The post-transition activities mean ( $M = 2.296$ ) was significantly lower than the pre-transition activities mean ( $M = 2.455$ ). The mean difference was  $-.159$ . Student apprehension regarding the academic aspects of high school decreased after the eighth and ninth grade transition activities.

Question 5: Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the social aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities? To address the fifth research question, the following alternative hypothesis was tested.  $H_5$ : There is a significant difference in student apprehensions regarding social

aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. There is significant evidence that the alternative hypothesis is true. There was a statistically significant decrease in the survey scores on student apprehension regarding the social aspects of high school ( $t = -22.133$ ,  $df = 470$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The post-transition activities mean ( $M = 1.791$ ) was significantly lower than the pre-transition activities mean ( $M = 2.343$ ). The mean difference was  $-.552$ . Student apprehension regarding the social aspects of high school decreased after the eighth and ninth grade transition activities.

Question 6: Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the organizational aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities? To address the sixth research question, the following alternative hypothesis was tested.  $H_6$ : There is a significant difference in student apprehensions regarding the organizational aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. There is significant evidence that the alternative hypothesis is true. There was a statistically significant decrease in the survey scores on student apprehension of the organizational aspects of high school ( $t = -29.433$ ,  $df = 476$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The post-transition activities mean ( $M = 1.705$ ) was significantly lower than the pre-transition mean ( $M = 2.674$ ). The mean difference was  $-.969$ . Student apprehension regarding the organizational aspects of high school decreased after the eighth and ninth grade transition activities.

Table 12 presents the results of the statistical analyses for comparison of the pretest and posttest survey results of 489 students from the Lee's Summit School District that transitioned from the eighth to ninth grade.

Table 12

*Paired-Samples t tests Results for Pre- and Post-Survey Subscale Scores on Perceptions of Transition Survey*

	<i>M</i> Pretest	<i>M</i> Posttest	Mean Difference	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
<b>Anticipation</b>						
Academic Aspects	2.306	3.290	.983	28.762	473	.000
Social Aspects	3.042	3.332	.291	9.507	467	.000
Organizational Aspects	3.296	3.166	-.130	-3.905	480	.000
<b>Apprehension</b>						
Academic Aspects	2.455	2.296	-.159	-4.531	466	.000
Social Aspects	2.343	1.791	-.552	-22.133	470	.000
Organizational Aspects	2.674	1.705	-.969	-29.433	476	.000

### Summary

A comparison examined the perceptions of ninth grade students regarding the effectiveness of middle to high school transition activities. Comparisons were gathered from student responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey, reflecting how transition activities may have affected the academic, social, and organizational experiences of students in their anticipation and apprehension regarding transition to high school. The eighth grade students (class of 2012) in the Lee's Summit School District's three middle schools comprised the test group ( $N = 1380$ ). The study involved comparing the students

on the Perceptions of Transition Survey administered at two times during the study: once prior to transition activities and again following transition activities. The students' average pretest and posttest survey scores were analyzed using a paired samples *t* test on six questions in two major categories of anticipation and apprehension.

The specific type of items related to academic aspects, social aspects, and organizational aspects provided further examination of the anticipation and apprehension categories. Six research questions and their respective alternate hypotheses were analyzed using paired samples *t* tests at the .05 level of significance. All six null hypotheses were rejected. There were statistically significant differences determined in the perceptions of the sample group of 489 students in all three subscales for both anticipation and apprehension regarding transition to high school. The final chapter, Chapter Five, consists of a summary of the study, discussion of the findings related to the literature, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, and conclusions.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

The transition from middle school to high school is often difficult for students. It is particularly difficult for those students who are considered to be at risk, of not succeeding. Indications from existing research suggest students will experience more success in making the transition when effective programs are designed and implemented to meet the needs or alleviate transition anxiety of all students.

Chapter Four provided the results of the statistical analysis of the study. Chapter Five includes a summary of the findings, implications, conclusions, and interpretations acquired from the results presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five also offers recommendations and suggestions for future studies related to middle school to high school transition involving academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school.

#### Study Summary

##### *Overview of Problem*

The Lee's Summit School District does not have a formalized transition program. Since 1993, students and parents in the Lee's Summit School District have engaged in transition activities during the second semester of the eighth grade year as well as during the first semester of the ninth grade year. The specific eighth grade transition activities include eighth grade counselor visits (students), eighth grade parent night and orientation meeting (parents), a mandatory eighth grade enrollment conference (parents and students). Specific ninth grade transition activities are freshmen orientation-club day

(students) and an advisory program (students). The advisory program, considered the hallmark of the transition activities, was introduced in 2003.

*Purpose Statement and Research Questions*

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how student perceptions in the class of 2012 were affected by participation in Lee's Summit transition activities. The study examined student differences in anticipation and apprehension regarding academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school. The following six research questions were addressed:

1. Were survey responses about anticipation of the academic aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?
2. Were survey responses about anticipation of the social aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?
3. Were survey responses about anticipation of the organizational aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?
4. Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the academic aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?
5. Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the social aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?

6. Were survey responses about apprehensions regarding the organizational aspects of high school different after students participated in Lee's Summit transition activities?

### *Review of the Methodology*

In the spring of 2008, The Perceptions of Transition Survey was taken by the Class of 2012 in their eighth grade year. The Class of 2012 took the second administration of the Perceptions of Transition Survey in fall 2008.

The study involved a survey research design comparing a group of students on a Perception of Transition Survey at two times during the study: once following eighth grade transition activities and again following ninth grade transition activities. The Perceptions of Transition Survey consisted of 35 items that prompted participants to reflect on their transition to high school. Each item used a 4-point Likert response format ranging from a choice of 1 indicating *strongly disagree* to a choice of 4 indicating *strongly agree*. The survey contained common subscales, measuring the extent to which students were anticipating, or looking forward to, and apprehensive, or worried about, the academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school.

### Major Findings

The use and outcome of a paired samples t-test in this study yielded mixed evidence about student perceptions of anticipation and apprehension related to the academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school transition. The results of this study reveal transition activities in the Lee's Summit School District appear to be effective regarding student perceptions of both anticipation and apprehension related to academic and social aspects of high school. The results of the study show transition

activities in the Lee's Summit School district also appear to be effective regarding student perceptions of apprehension related to the organizational aspects of high school. The results of the study additionally indicate transition activities in the Lee's Summit School District appear to be less effective regarding student perceptions of anticipation related to organizational aspects of high school.

The data were analyzed with regard to the alternative hypotheses discussed below. Each hypothesis was statistically examined by a paired samples  $t$  test to determine if an item had an effect on anticipation or apprehension. The findings for all hypotheses with the exception of  $H_3$  show there was sufficient evidence to conclude the alternative hypotheses could be accepted as true at the  $p < .05$  significance level. There was a statistically significant positive increase in student perceptions of anticipation related to academic and social aspects of high school. There was a statistically significant decrease regarding student perceptions of apprehension related to academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school. The finding for  $H_3$  was in the opposite direction than expected.

#### *Hypothesis 1*

$H_1$ : There is a significant difference in student anticipation of academic aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey.

The findings for  $H_1$  show a statistically significant increase in scores on student anticipation of the academic aspects of high school between 8th and 9th grade as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. Anticipation of the academic aspects of high school suggests students might have been



more comfortable with high school as related to freedom to choose some classes, take classes in new subjects, have new teachers, and get good grades. These positive differences and increases in posttest scores suggested students may have been more prepared for academic aspects of high school as a result of the transition activities they experienced as related to freedom to choose an academic plan; freedom to choose some classes; taking classes in new subjects; having new teachers, and getting good grades.

### *Hypothesis 2*

$H_2$ : There is a significant difference in student anticipation of the social aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey.

The findings for  $H_2$  show a statistically significant increase in scores on student anticipation of the social aspects of high school between eighth and ninth grade as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. Anticipation of the social aspects of high school, which generated the most significant increase, suggests students were possibly most comfortable with making new friends and attending school events. Students also expressed comfort in being around more students, being around older students, and meeting new students.

These positive differences and increases in post-test scores suggest students may have been more comfortable with the social aspects of high school as a result of the transition activities they experienced related to being around more students, being around older students, making new friends, meeting new students, and attending school events. While there was not a negative difference in students participating in extra-curricular activities, the posttest mean score indicated a minor decrease in the item related to

students participating in extra-curricular activities. The slight decrease or difference in the post-test mean score related to participating in extra-curricular activities suggests students may enjoy extra-curricular activities, but they were possibly less comfortable or less interested in participating in available extra-curricular activities, perhaps due to disappointment in not being selected to participate in more competitive activities. The researcher was somewhat troubled to learn that students' posttest scores for participation in activities were slightly decreased. The researcher was unaware whether students were engaged in or committed to various outside non-curricular league or church activities.

### *Hypothesis 3*

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant difference in student anticipation of the organizational aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey.

The findings for *H<sub>3</sub>* show there was a statistically significant negative difference in scores on student anticipation of the organizational aspects of high school between eighth and ninth grade as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. Anticipation of the organizational aspects of high school suggests students were comfortable with and perhaps enjoyed being in a larger school but were less comfortable or not as satisfied with the choices for lunch. Results indicate an overall negative difference and decrease in the posttest scores related to the organizational aspects of high school. However, a review of the two individual items reveal an increase in the posttest item score related to students being in a larger school and a decrease in the posttest item score related to students having more choices for lunch. The increase or difference in the posttest item score related to being in a larger school suggests students

may have been comfortable with the organizational aspects of high school as a result of the transition activities they experienced related to the transition of being in a larger school. The specific item was phrased “I enjoy being in a larger school.” The decrease or difference in the posttest score related to more choices for lunch suggests students may have been dissatisfied with choices or may have perceived existing choices for lunch were limited, as the item was phrased “I have more choices for lunch.”

#### *Hypothesis 4*

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a significant difference in student apprehensions regarding academic aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey.

The findings for *H<sub>4</sub>* show a statistically significant decrease in scores on student apprehension regarding the academic aspects of high school between eighth and ninth grade as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The decrease in apprehension regarding the academic aspects of high school suggests students may have been less concerned or worried about issues related to parent pressure to do well in classes, difficult teachers, too much homework, teacher pressure to do well, and difficult classes. Student scores specifically relating to difficult teachers generated the least concern and suggested students were comfortable with their teachers and related academic aspects. This negative difference and decrease in posttest scores suggest students may have been more comfortable and less concerned or worried about academic aspects regarding high school as a result of the transition activities.

#### *Hypothesis 5*

$H_5$ : There is a significant difference in student apprehensions regarding social aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey.

The findings for  $H_5$  show a statistically significant decrease in scores on student apprehension regarding the social aspects of high school between eighth and ninth grade as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey on all of the items. Decreases in the ratings of apprehension regarding the social aspects of high school suggests students may have been less concerned or worried about issues related to getting along with others, being bullied, fitting in, being safe, peer pressure to do things they don't want to do, and being accepted by others. Student scores specifically relating to being bullied generated the least concern and suggested students may have been more comfortable with their peers related to being bullied.

As previously mentioned in Chapter Three, two apprehension social items, "I feel safe at school" and "I feel accepted by others," written in the negative format, required reverse scoring analysis to obtain appropriate interpretation of how student perceptions were affected by participation in transition activities. The mean scores for each of these items after reverse scoring analysis indicated students agreed they felt safe and were accepted by others, regarding the apprehension social subscale. The negative difference and decrease in posttest scores suggest students may have been more comfortable and less concerned or worried about social aspects regarding high school as a result of the transition activities they experienced. These social aspects related to getting along with others, being bullied, fitting in, being safe, peer pressure to do things they don't want to do and being accepted by others. Findings suggest students were less concerned about

significant social aspects that research indicates might affect their transition and school success.

### *Hypothesis 6*

$H_6$ : There is a significant difference in student apprehensions regarding the organizational aspects of high school as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey.

The findings for  $H_6$  show a statistically significant decrease in scores on student apprehension regarding the organizational aspects of high school between eighth and ninth grade as determined by pretest and posttest responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey. Decreases in the ratings of apprehension regarding the organizational aspects of high school suggests students may have been less concerned or worried about finding their way, new rules, or getting lost, which suggests students appear to be comfortable with navigating the new environment and understanding the rules of high school. Students were the least concerned about getting lost, suggesting transition activities might have assisted in their level of comfort and understanding.

As indicated in Chapter Three, one apprehension organizational item, “I understand the new rules,” written in the negative format, required a reverse scoring analysis to obtain appropriate interpretation of how student perceptions were affected by participation in transition activities. The mean scores for this item after reverse scoring analysis indicate students agree they might have been familiar with high school expectations and may have understood new rules regarding the apprehension organizational subscale. The negative difference and decrease in posttest scores suggest students may have been more comfortable and less concerned or worried about

organizational aspects regarding high school as a result of the transition activities they experienced as related to finding their way around, new rules, and getting lost. Findings suggest students were less concerned about significant organizational aspects that research indicates might affect their transition and school success.

### *Summary of Findings*

The overall results of student scores on the anticipation subscale were positive or increased from the pretest to the posttest for the academic and social aspects of high school. Student scores on the anticipation subscale were negative or decreased for the organizational aspects of high school, specifically related to the number of lunch choices. The overall results of student scores on the apprehension subscale were negative and decreased from the pretest to the posttest for the academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school. Student scores on the apprehension subscale were negative for all aspects of high school.

Student perceptions of transition and the overall findings, which yielded mixed evidence, indicate satisfactory news on all aspects of anticipation and apprehension regarding academic and social issues. The findings also indicate encouraging news on apprehension regarding organizational aspects of high school. Finally, the findings indicate unsatisfactory news or need for adjustment or improvement on two anticipation organizational aspects of transition: participating in extra-curricular activities and more choices for lunch

In Chapter Two, the review of the literature presented research related to academic, social, and organizational concerns of students transitioning to high school; the impact of dropping out; suggestions for what schools can do to ease transition, and specifically designed activities to promote success for students during their ninth grade year. As discussed in Chapter Three, student perceptions of transition were examined using the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The Perceptions of Transition Survey used in this study has been used in other middle school to high school transition studies. Findings from the literature review and this study were analyzed with regard to the research questions and hypotheses. This study, as well as results of studies focusing on concerns of transition, provides a better understanding of the transition from middle school to high school in the Lee's Summit School District and similar school districts.

Consistent concerns throughout the literature emphasize that student perceptions of anticipation and apprehension related to academic, social, and organizational aspects are significant in transition. Findings from this study compared to the literature review suggest student perceptions of transition in the Lee's Summit School District may not be consistently aligned with and in support of some aspects of existing transition research.

According to existing transition research, students who struggle with transition encounter worry and uncertainty about each segment of daily life in high school. Akos and Glassi (2004) stated,

While academic and social concerns in transition studies have been identified as primary, concerns related to getting lost, older students and bullies, too much homework, school rules, making new friends, and unfamiliarity with lockers continue to be frequently mentioned as substantial student concerns.

Additional research suggested young adolescents transitioning to a new educational setting also worry about getting lunch and having enough time to eat; undressing in front of others; meeting students of the opposite sex; and having mean, uncaring teachers (Barone et al., 1991; Eccles et al., 1984; Mizelle, 1995; Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). Weldy's (1991) study of student reflections offered insights about concerns of students in Gwinnet County, Georgia as they moved to a new school. Students in the Weldy study specifically referenced reporting to class on time, navigating crowded hallways, and remembering their bus number at the end of the day as sources of enormous worry. Students in these studies also revealed concerns about their personal safety at school, where they might encounter hostility. (Anderman & Kimweli, 1997; Arowosafe-Schumacher & Irvin, 1992; Odegaard & Heath, 1992).

During the March 2008 administration of the Perceptions of Transition Survey in the current study, results of student perceptions indicated some of these same concerns. Issues included too much homework, difficult teachers, difficult classes, being safe, accepted by others, finding their way around, and new rules appear as somewhat significant prior to making the transition from middle school to high school in the Lee's Summit School District. Interestingly, however, during the October 2008 administration of the Perceptions of Transition Survey in the current study, results of student perceptions in the Lee's Summit School District indicated these same concerns appeared as less significant after making the transition from middle school to high school. Students' positive ratings of school transition in this study may have reflected the fact that both middle school and high school had already implemented unspecified activities to facilitate the transition. Additionally, more choices for lunch in pretest scores indicated



increased anticipation. However, more choices for lunch in posttest scores generated a significant decrease in anticipation, resulting in some concern.

Reviewing previous research has established the positive effect that transition programs have on all stakeholders: students, parents, and educators. Schools can realize strong gains in student success rates by implementing programs that students and their parents perceive as useful in the transition process. Students in the Lee's Summit School District did not appear to have major concerns related to anticipation or apprehension regarding academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school, as indicated in some of the existing research. However, students' anticipation and apprehension of high school are significant in transition, and further studies on the differences and effects among students and districts are warranted.

#### Implications for Action

The study has implications for understanding the academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school transition in the Lee's Summit School District and comparable learning environments in the Midwest. The implications for the Lee's Summit School District are significant as the district evaluates and reviews expectations and effectiveness of the transition activities. District administrators and secondary building level principals and counselors will receive a summary of the students' perceptions of transition.

The purpose of the transition activities was to increase students' anticipation and ease apprehensions regarding academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school. The students were exposed to five transition activities: eighth grade counselor visits (students), eighth grade parent night and orientation meeting (parents), a mandatory

eighth grade enrollment conference (parents and students), freshmen orientation-club day (students) and an advisory program (students). The study results indicate transition activities in the Lee's Summit School District appear to be effective, according to student responses, regarding the majority of anticipation and apprehension of academic, social, and organizational aspects of middle to high school transition. Increases in the anticipation academic and social aspects as well as decreases in the apprehension academic, social, and organizational aspects could be because the district provides a variety of academic and organizational opportunities for students to succeed.

For instance, students have access to selecting rigorous coursework throughout their high school career, ACT preparation courses, and an advisory program. Organizational efforts such as teaming, freshmen transition day, and a modified blended block schedule are also provided. These programs and opportunities offer students an increased chance of high school graduation, higher ACT scores, increased likelihood of graduation from a 4-year-college, and increased earning potential.

It is unknown if transition activities related to academic and organizational issues, which may have generated the positive results, were related to the transition activities or if teachers and related factors, as indicated above, may have helped to influence the positive impact of transition. Additionally, given that the district provides a variety of social opportunities for students to succeed, it is unknown if transition activities related to social issues may have resulted in the positive impact. Alternatively, students' maturity, desire to meet new students, opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities, reduced fear, or other factors might have helped to influence positive transition.

The results also indicate transition activities in the Lee's Summit School District appear to be less effective, according to student responses, regarding apprehension of specific organizational aspects of high school. The decrease in the anticipation of organizational aspects could be because students expected more elaborate or popular choices for lunch. Given the district provides opportunity for students at all levels to participate in its nutrition council to communicate and establish set guidelines related to nutrition, this researcher was astonished to learn students felt they did not have significant choices for lunch. It is uncertain what specific concern students might have related to choices for lunch. Additional investigations in this area should be conducted to determine specific concerns related to choices for lunch.

The underlying implication is much can be done and must be done to support ninth grade students throughout their high school experiences. The district can use the data to identify students' perceptions of the transition and address needed areas of program and activity improvement that are designed to effectively meet the needs of all students. Schools must continue to collect, analyze and use data to make intelligent informed decisions about the types of programs and activities needed to sustain incoming ninth grade students.

#### *Recommendations for Lee's Summit*

The implications and recommendation for action at this time in the Lee's Summit School District are not critical as the overall findings suggest students in the district appear to transition from middle school to high school with ease. One reason for student and district success may be associated with the district's transition activities. The district has high expectations and communications pertaining to academic, social, and

organizational aspects of high school. The district emphasizes and requires mandatory participation of parents and students in the eighth grade enrollment conference, which promotes clear and concise expectations for overall school success.

The advisory program, considered the most sustaining of the transition activities, offers opportunities for ninth grade students and their advisors to meet regularly throughout their high school career. The advisory program in the Lee's Summit School District emphasizes preparing students for enrollment each spring, culminating with a collaborative enrollment conference that involves parents, students, and teachers. Advisory lessons include team-building activities, study skills, test taking tips, and career exploration to encourage enrollment in appropriate courses. Advisors work with students to assist them in declaring a focused learning path, which is recommended for each student in tenth grade. Students receive grade reports every 6 weeks during the advisory program and work with their academic advisors to set goals and analyze progress.

Despite district expectations and communications pertaining to academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school or the advisory program, data from the research and research to date on middle school to high school transition suggest that effective transition programming is vital in assisting and meeting the needs of all students. As a result, the Lee's Summit School District cannot ignore its series of one-time activities, with the exception of the advisory program, versus a comprehensive transition program designed to meet the needs of students. The transition provides a challenge as well as an opportunity for students and educators.

The research suggests proactive approaches to transition involving extensive planning and increased communication are essential aspects in the guidelines for school

officials coordinating transition programs. As discussed in Chapter Two, specific steps include collecting data to guide school improvement, making increased graduation rates a part of the district mission, restructuring ninth grade to incorporate support services, and revising district policies that may result in student disengagement from school. All these steps will strengthen the transition to and through high school (Wheelock & Miao, 2005). Additionally, Zeedyk and associates (2003) suggested several actions that would enhance the transition process: include more visitation days between schools; allow students to spend a day with older students; invite high school students and teachers to speak at the feeder schools; and provide mentoring to middle school students by their high school counterparts. Finally, if many students in the Lee's Summit School District transition with ease from middle school to high school, the district might consider providing more extensive transition activities for students at risk.

Transition programs and activities from middle school to high school should be designed to ensure that students and their families are completely informed about all aspects related to the new environment's requirements, procedures, opportunities, and responsibilities. Smith's 2006 study suggests middle and high school staff should work to provide programs and experiences to help familiarize students with the various similarities and differences in academic, social, and organizational structures of the schools (Smith, 2006). Transition programs and activities should ensure all students are prepared for the academic, social, and organizational demands of the new school. Transition programs and activities should be evaluated regularly to determine continued effectiveness in meeting the needs of all students.

#### Recommendation for Future Research

The extent of this study is not adequate to determine the total success of transition activities in the Lee's Summit School District. This study examined only anticipation and apprehension, two of four subscales, on the Perceptions of Transition Survey.

Recommendations for further research should consider a comprehensive review and analysis of the remaining subscales (helper and parents) and data obtained for the class of 2012. A complete analysis of remaining subscales is recommended to determine if other factors may have influenced the results of this study. The additional analysis should provide greater insight of transition in the Lee's Summit School District.

Additionally, it is suggested the Perceptions of Transition Survey (pretest) be administered before any of the transition activities to obtain a diverse analysis of student perceptions of transition. The Perceptions of Transition Survey also has the ability to measure parent perceptions of the transition to high school. The Lee's Summit School District, as well as others, may want to consider such information in developing more effective transition programs from middle school to high school. The information should be useful in assisting school counselors and administrators to develop proactive interventions that enable students and their families to navigate the new school environment successfully and to minimize problems that may arise due to transition. Additional studies are urged to promote evaluation of transition activities in the Lee's Summit School District.

A final suggestion is to implement a study that examines the influence of various demographic and social variables related to under-achieving and minority students to determine the impact of middle school to high school transition on these groups. The potential cultural effects may promote and encourage consideration of differences in

transition programming and activities necessary for a diverse group of students. The study should provide better insights for effectively meeting the personal, academic, social and organizational needs of these students.

### Concluding Remarks

In summary, this study examined the perceptions of students' anticipation and apprehension regarding academic, social, and organizational aspects of middle to high school transition. The results revealed mixed evidence from the students' perceptions of the challenges and opportunities posed by the transition related to academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school. Student perceptions provided useful transition information, which, when combined with the findings from previous research, led to some support of but not total alignment with all aspects of existing research.

Clearly, research supports the premise that middle school to high school transition is difficult and often presents a series of academic, social, and organizational challenges that determine whether ninth grade students will continue their education or decide to leave school without a high school diploma. Schools that structure transition programs to include a variety of activities focused on the needs of students can be instrumental in helping to provide successful school experiences for ninth grade students. Successful transition programs improve attendance, achievement, and retention.

Research suggests that successful programs include five or more varied activities addressing students, parents, and teachers while spanning the spring and summer prior to transition and continuing through the fall of transition. The Lee's Summit School District offers a series of transition activities and appears to be meeting the academic, social, and many organizational needs of ninth grade students via its five transition activities. The

district must continue, however, to strive to meet the needs of each individual student, particularly students at risk of dropping out.



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APPENDIX A:  
PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSITION SURVEYS

## Eighth Grade Survey

This survey asks questions about your feelings as you prepare to move to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The information will help teachers, administrators and others improve conditions that contribute to your learning, development, and preparation for 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Please take your time and respond to each question thoughtfully. Your responses will be used in a study examining students' transition from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Thank you for your participation.

1. How old are you today?

- 13 or younger                       16  
 14     17 or older  
 15

2. Are you      Male                       Female

3. What is your racial or ethnic identification (Mark all that apply).

- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin                       White  
 American Indian or other Native American    Other, specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Asian American or Pacific Islander                       Prefer not to respond  
 Black/African American

4. Is English the main language used in your home?

- Yes                                       No

5. What have most of your middle school grades been?  
(Mark one response only)

- Mostly As                       Mixed Cs and Ds  
 Mixed As and Bs    Mostly Ds  
 Mostly Bs                       Below D  
 Mixed Bs and Cs    Grades not used  
 Mostly Cs                       Do not know

6. Which category represents most of your classes?  
(Mark one response only)

- General/Regular                       Honors/College Prep  
 Special Education                       Career/Vocational  
 Courses for College Credit    Do not know

7. Do you have a computer with Internet access at home?

- Yes  No

Fill in one circle that best describes how you feel about the following items.

	Graduate High School	Vocational/ Trade School	Attend College	Graduate School
How far in school do you think your parent/guardian, wants you to go?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How far in school do you want to go?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	High school	Trade School	College	Graduate School
What is your parents/guardian's highest level of education?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which of the following activities have you been involved in 8<sup>th</sup> grade? (Please check or fill in all that apply).

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> a school sports team or cheerleading | <input type="radio"/> a school club (please specify: _____) |
| <input type="radio"/> a school play or drama group         | <input type="radio"/> The school newspaper or yearbook      |
| <input type="radio"/> the school choir                     | <input type="radio"/> The school band/orchestra             |
| <input type="radio"/> class council                        | <input type="radio"/> student government                    |
| <input type="radio"/> other (please specify) _____         |   |

In which of the following activities are you interested in becoming involved during 9<sup>th</sup> grade (please fill in all that apply).

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> a school sports team or cheerleading | <input type="radio"/> a school club (please specify: _____) |
| <input type="radio"/> a school play or drama group         | <input type="radio"/> the school newspaper or yearbook      |
| <input type="radio"/> the school choir                     | <input type="radio"/> the school band/orchestra             |
| <input type="radio"/> class council                        | <input type="radio"/> student government                    |
| <input type="radio"/> other (please specify) _____         |   |

When you think about going to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I look forward to being in a larger school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look forward to having the freedom to choose an academic plan.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I look forward to being around more students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look forward to being able to choose some of my classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look forward to being around older students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look forward to making new friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look forward to taking classes in new subjects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I look forward to having new teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look forward to participating in extra curricular activities (e.g. sports, clubs, student government, band, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look forward to getting good grades.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look forward to being in a school with new students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look forward to having more choices for lunch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look forward to attending school events (e.g. sports, games, dances, concerts, plays, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

When you think about going to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I worry about finding my way around.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about getting along with other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry that my parents will put too much pressure on me to do well in my classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry that my peers will put too much pressure on me to do well in my classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about being bullied.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about fitting in.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about having difficult teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I worry about my safety.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about new rules.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about having too much homework.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about feeling peer pressure to do things I don't want to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about being accepted by other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about getting lost.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry that my teachers will put too much pressure on me to do well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about having difficult classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

When you think about your feelings about school in general, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Being a good student is an important part of who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like the things I do at school waste my time more than the things I do outside of school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My grades do not tell me anything about my intelligence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School is satisfying to me because it gives me a sense of accomplishment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If the tests we took were fair, I would be doing much better in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am often relieved if I just pass a test.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often do my best work in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not care what tests say about my intelligence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School is very boring for me, and I am not learning what I feel is important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I put a great deal of myself into some of the things at school because they have special meaning and interest to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I feel that the grades I receive are a good reflection of my abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy school because it gives me a chance to learn many interesting things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No test will ever change my opinion of how smart I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

When you think about your current feelings in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students are treated fairly at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student at my school are not friendly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Excellent work is expected of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students are treated fairly by the principal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I behave well in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students at my school treat me with respect.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students in my school follow rules.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school building is clean.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are too many students in the classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teachers require that I work hard for the grades I get.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has enough books and equipment to help me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bathrooms in my school are clean.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers at my school make learning fun.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers at my school are friendly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Teachers at my school make me want to learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers at my school know a lot about the subject they teach.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers at my school give me homework that helps me learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teachers let me know how I am doing in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Violence is a problem at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The principal does a good job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adults at the school care for me as a person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like coming to my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am getting a good education at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The overall feeling at my school is positive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students are treated fairly by teachers at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How helpful has each of the following people been in preparing you to move from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade?

	Not Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful
High school counselors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8 <sup>th</sup> grade counselors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other family members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students in 8 <sup>th</sup> grade.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students in 9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grade.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



8 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other adults in the school (e.g. administrators, coaches, librarians).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fill in one circle that best describes how you feel about the following questions:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
How often do your parents/guardians check on whether or not you have done your homework?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How much have you talked to your parents/guardians about planning your high school program?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often have you talked to your parents/guardians about your grade in school?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often have you talked to your parents/guardians about your friends in school?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often do your parents/guardians go to your school for meetings, activities, parent conferences, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Ninth Grade Survey

This survey asks questions about your feelings as you complete your first semester of high school. The information will help teachers, administrators and counselors improve your learning, development, and overall high school experience. Please take your time and respond to each question thoughtfully. Thank you for your participation.

1. How old are you today?

- 13 or younger                       16  
 14                                       17 or older  
 15

2. Are you      Male                       Female

3. What is your racial or ethnic identification (Mark all that apply).

- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin                       White  
 American Indian or other Native American    Other, specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Asian American or Pacific Islander                       Prefer not to respond  
 Black/African American

4. Is English the main language used in your home?

- Yes                                       No

5. What have most of your middle school grades been?  
(Mark one response only)

- Mostly As                       Mixed Cs and Ds  
 Mixed As and Bs    Mostly Ds  
 Mostly Bs                       Below D  
 Mixed Bs and Cs    Grades not used  
 Mostly Cs                       Do not know

6. Which category represents most of your classes?  
(Mark one response only)

- General/Regular                       Honors/College Prep  
 Special Education                       Career/Vocational  
 Courses for College Credit    Do not know

7. Do you have a computer with Internet access at home?

- Yes  No

Fill in one circle that best describes how you feel about the following items.

	Graduate High School	Vocational/ Trade School	Attend College	Graduate School
How far in school do you think your parent/guardian, wants you to go?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How far in school do you want to go?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	High school	Vocational/ Trade School	College	Graduate School
What is your parents/guardian's highest level of education?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Check the following activities that you have been involved in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. (Please check or fill in all that apply).

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> a school sports team or cheerleading | <input type="radio"/> a school club (please specify: _____) |
| <input type="radio"/> a school play or drama group         | <input type="radio"/> the school newspaper or yearbook      |
| <input type="radio"/> the school choir                     | <input type="radio"/> the school band/orchestra             |
| <input type="radio"/> class council                        | <input type="radio"/> student government                    |
| <input type="radio"/> other (please specify): _____        |   |

Thinking back about your experiences in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoy being in a larger school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the freedom to choose an academic plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy being around more students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy being able to choose some of my classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy being around older students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have made new friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy taking classes in new subjects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy my new teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I participate in extra curricular activities (e.g. sports, clubs, student government, band, etc).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I am getting good grades in 9 <sup>th</sup> grade.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy being in school with new students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have more choices for lunch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I attend school events (e.g. sports, games, dances, concerts, plays, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thinking back about your experiences in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have trouble finding my way around.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have trouble getting along with other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My parents put too much pressure on me to do well in my classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My peers put too much pressure on me to do well in my classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have been bullied at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have trouble fitting in.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have difficult teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understand the new rules at high school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have too much homework.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel peer pressure to do things I don't want to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel accepted by other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get lost in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teachers put too much pressure on me to do well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My classes are difficult.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How helpful were these people in preparing you to move from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade:

	Not Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful
High school counselors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8 <sup>th</sup> grade counselors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other family members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students in 8 <sup>th</sup> grade.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students in 9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grade.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other adults in the school (e.g. administrators, coaches, librarians).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fill in one circle that best describes how you feel about the following items:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
How often do your parents/guardians check on whether or not you have done your homework?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How much do you talk to your parents/guardians about what you're learning in high school?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often do you talk to your parents/guardians about your grades in high school?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often do you talk to your parents/guardians about your friends in high school?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often do your parents/guardians go to your school for meeting, activities, parent conferences, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX B:  
IRB FORM



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
 IRB PROTOCOL NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
 GRADUATE DEPARTMENT  
 (IRB USE ONLY)

Date: April 23, 2008

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. <u>Dianna Rentie</u>	_____	Principal Investigator
2. <u>Dr. Elizabeth Sanders</u>	_____	X Check if faculty sponsor
3. <u>Dr. Susan Rogers</u>	_____	Check if faculty sponsor
4. <u>Dr. Amy Gates</u>	_____	Check if faculty sponsor

Principal investigator or Phone: 816 986-1129 (W) 816 246-0263 (H)  
 Faculty sponsor contact information: Email: dianna.rentie@leesummit.k12.mo.us

Mailing address of Principal Investigator:

1. Dianna L. Rentie  
 550 S.W. Trailpark Drive  
 Lee's Summit. MO 64081

Expected Category of Review: \_\_\_ Exempt \_\_\_ Expedited X Full

**II: Protocol Title**

“The Relationship Between Student Perceptions of Transition Activities from Middle School to High School and Student Success”

**II. 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 this study is to compare the perceptions of students, regarding the effectiveness of middle to high school transition activities as reflected by their responses to the Perceptions of Transition Survey.*

This study will provide the Lee's Summit School District insights into the effectiveness of current transition activities while serving as a resource for planning a standardized transition program.

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

This study will employ a quasi-experimental research design. All identified groups will take the Perceptions of Transition Survey at two times during the study (Perceptions of Transition Survey Attached). The eighth grade students (Class 2012) in the Lee's Summit School District's three middle schools will comprise the test group (N=1500). The test group will engage in several transition activities during their eighth grade year as well as their ninth grade year. Specific transition activities are as follows: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Counselor Visits, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Night/Orientation Meeting, and a Mandatory 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Enrollment Conference. In addition, specific ninth grade transition activities are as follows: Freshmen Orientation/Club Day and an Advisory Program.

**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.**

The Perceptions of Transition Survey consist of 35 items that prompt participants to reflect on their transition to high school. Each item uses a four-point Likert response format ranging from (1 = strongly disagree) to (4 = strongly agree). The survey contains common subscales, measuring the extent to which students are looking forward to (a=82) and worried about (a=94) academic, social, and organization aspects of high school. A final subscale of the survey (Helper) requires students to rate how helpful their eighth grade counselors, teachers, parents and transition activities were in assisting them prior to and after the transition to high school. With parent permission, all members of the test group will take the Perceptions of Transition Survey two times. The first administration of the survey (pre-survey) will occur after the completion of the eighth grade transition activities. The test group will take the Perceptions of Transition Survey a second time (post survey) after the completion of the ninth grade transition activities. A record of attendance using the student number will be maintained to ensure only students taking the eighth grade survey will take the ninth grade survey. Data pertaining to attendance, discipline, and student involvement in activities will be obtained from the Lee's Summit School District's AS400 system and assessed as indicators of student success.



**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.**

No risks are perceived to be encountered by any participant in the study.

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

No stress is perceived to be encountered by any participant in the study.

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

It is not the intent to deceive or mislead the participants of this study in any way. Prior to the administration of the pre-survey and the post-survey, the researcher will provide a brief introductory rationale explaining the purpose of the survey/study is to provide information to better meet the needs of students transitioning from middle school to high school in the Lee's Summit School District.

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

The survey will request students to self-report their age, gender, ethnicity, grades, and involvement in student activities. *The self-reported information will be validated by the use of the district's AS 400 system.* The researcher will not have access to information identifying any student in the study.

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

No material will be presented which might be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading.

**Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?**

Approximately 10-15 minutes will be required to complete the Perceptions of Transition Survey. The pre-survey will be administered to eighth grade students in February 2008. The post-survey will be administered to the same student population in Fall-October 2008.

**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.**

All Lee's Summit School District current eighth grade middle school students (Class of 2012) will be the subjects of this study. Students will not individually be solicited or contacted.

**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 Lee's Summit School District current eighth grade students in (Class of 2012) will be encouraged to participate in the study. Parents and students will be informed of the survey during the Eighth Grade Orientation. Both the students and the parents will be apprised of the option to not participate in the study. The Board of Education has given the Lee's Summit School District Administration the authority to authorize surveys. **See attached documents, p. 7, "Lee's Summit School District: Dianna L. Rentie, Dissertation for Educational Doctorate (Ed.D) Program, Baker University"**. Students are not directly participating in this study. As such, there are no inducements being offered.

**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.**

See statements above.

**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 aspect of the data will be made a part of a permanent record that will individually identify any subject's participation in 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 information pertaining to a subject's participation, or lack thereof, will be made a part of any permanent record that will be available to a supervisor, teacher, or employer.

**What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data?**

No names of students will ever be identified to the researcher, individuals, or identifying aspects that reveal the privacy of said subjects.

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

No risks have been identified with the study pertaining to any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society.

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

Attendance, discipline, and demographic data will be obtained from the Lee's Summit School District's AS400.

Respectively submitted for your review this 23rd day of April, 2008, by

Dianna L. Rentie  
Doctoral Student  
Baker University  
School of Education  
Graduate Department

Attached: Perceptions of Transition Survey (Pre-Test and Post-Test)  
Lee's Summit School District Doctoral Study Approval  
Parent and Student Survey Notification  
Perceptions of Transition Survey Author Approval  
(Dr. Joshua Smith and Dr. Patrick Akos)

## APPENDIX C:

## PERMISSION TO USE SURVEYS



"Smith, Joshua S."  
 <jss2@iupui.edu>  
 01/29/2008 03:13 PM

To "Dianna.Rentie@leesummit.k12.mo.us"  
 <Dianna.Rentie@leesummit.k12.mo.us>

cc

bcc

Subject RE: Perceptions of Transition Survey

Hi Dianna,  
 Here is some information that I hope will be helpful. I have attached the parent and student survey items and a report that I provided one of the schools. It contains some reliability estimates and the tables show which items correspond to the different subscales. Please let me know if you need additional information.  
 Take care,  
 Josh

Joshua S. Smith, Ph.D.  
 Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology  
 Interim Director, Center for Urban and Multicultural Education  
 Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis  
 Indiana University School of Education, Indianapolis  
 902 West New York Street-ES 3151  
 Indianapolis, IN 46202  
 317-274-6843

-----Original Message-----

From: Dianna.Rentie@leesummit.k12.mo.us  
 [mailto:Dianna.Rentie@leesummit.k12.mo.us]  
 Sent: Friday, January 18, 2008 5:00 PM  
 To: Smith, Joshua S.  
 Subject: Re: Perceptions of Transition Survey

Good Afternoon Dr. Smith,

Thank you for sending me copies of the Perceptions of Transition Survey to use in my research study at Baker University. As per my earlier communication, I am looking at The Perceptions of Ninth Grade Transition Programs on Student Success as Viewed by Students in the Lee's Summit School District. The IRB committee has requested additional information about the Perceptions of Transition Survey. Specifically, history of the survey, breakdown of likert scale questions, reliability, validity and/or any other information available about the survey. If such information is available, I would greatly appreciate it if you could send it to me via e-mail or regular mail. My mailing address is below. In addition, would you send a letter or statement indicating I have permission to use the survey. Thank you so much for your time and effort in this matter. I truly appreciate it.

Dianna Rentie  
 Director, Classified Personnel  
 Human Resources  
 Lee's Summit R-7 School District  
 301 N.E. Tudor Road  
 Lee's Summit, MO 64086-5702  
 (816)986-1129

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## APPENDIX D: PERMISSION FROM SCHOOL DISTRICT



## Lee's Summit R-7 School District

301 NE Tudor Rd  
Lee's Summit, MO 64086-5702  
(816) 986-1027 Fax (816) 986-1060

Office of Instruction and Leadership

January 28, 2008

Dianna L. Rentie  
Director, Classified Personnel  
Lee's Summit R-7 School District  
301 NE Tudor Road  
Lee's Summit, MO 64086-5702

Dear Dianna,

The Lee's Summit School District approves your doctoral dissertation request to conduct the study *The Perceptions of Ninth Grade Transition Programs on Student Success as Viewed by Students in the Lee's Summit School District* at the district's three middle schools and three high schools.

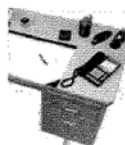
You may have access to archival data (student attendance, discipline, drop-out rate and student involvement in activities) with the understanding that no students will be identified in the process or in the final report, and you will utilize normal school procedures to guarantee student, counselor and administrator confidentiality. Further, I understand that all student data collected will be shredded and incinerated at the completion of the study.

Good luck with your study. I look forward to the report.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ann Starlin-Horner  
Associate Superintendent,  
Instruction and School Leadership

## APPENDIX E: SURVEY COMMUNICATION TO PRINCIPALS



Dianna  
Rentie/Administration/LSSD  
01/24/2008 11:57 AM

To Don Andrews/Administration/LSSD, Janette K  
Cooley/Administration/LSSD, Vicki  
Porter/Administration/LSSD  
cc Ann Starlin-Horner/Administration/LSSD, Stan  
Elliott/Administration/LSSD  
bcc  
Subject Transition Study-FYI

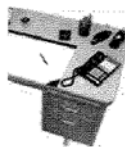
The transition from middle school to high school can be a challenging experience for ninth grade students. As a result, IOT is reviewing my request to study *The Perceptions of Ninth Grade Transition Programs as Viewed by Students in the Lee's Summit School District*. Upon approval of the request, I would like to collect information via survey from our current eighth grade students (Class 2012) about their perceptions of the transition from middle to high school. The pre-survey could be administered in March 2008 after the introduction of the 8th Grade Transition Activities (8th Grade Counselor Visits, 8th Grade Parent Night/Orientation Meeting and Mandatory 8th Grade Enrollment Conference). A post-survey would be administered to the same students (Class 2012) in October after the introduction of 9th Grade Transition Activities-(Freshmen Orientation/Club Day and Advisory Program).

This information will help provide the Lee's Summit School District insights into the effectiveness of current transition activities while possibly serving as a resource for planning a standardized transition program.

Although completion of the survey will be optional, students are encouraged to participate as their help in gathering information on the transition from middle to high school in Lee's Summit would be greatly appreciated. Survey participants will remain anonymous. The information collected will only be used for the purpose of the study and within the district to improve programming for ninth grade students in the Lee's Summit School District.

The survey will be available for on-line administration. The paper and pencil option will also be available if necessary. Additional information will be disseminated upon approval of the request. Please feel free to share with your counselors as needed and let me know your thoughts. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Dianna Rentie  
Director, Classified Personnel  
Human Resources



Dianna  
Rentie/Administration/LSSD  
02/06/2008 09:59 AM

To Don Andrews/Administration/LSSD@LSSD, Vicki  
Porter/Administration/LSSD@LSSD, Janette K  
Cooley/Administration/LSSD@LSSD  
cc Ann Starlin-Horner/Administration/LSSD, Stan  
Elliott/Administration/LSSD  
bcc  
Subject Survey Notification Letter

**Good Morning,**

**On Monday, January 28, 2008, IOT approved my request to study *The Comparison of Eighth Grade Student Perceptions of Transition from Middle School to High School in the Lee's Summit School District.***

**As per my previous email, I would like to collect information via survey from our current eighth grade students (Class 2012) about their perceptions of the transition from middle to high school. The pre-survey for this study is available on-line and should be administered in March 2008 after the introduction of the eighth grade transition activities. Directions for obtaining and administering the survey will be emailed later.**

**A letter notifying parents and students about the study and survey is attached. The survey notification letter should be disseminated to parents during the Eighth Grade Parent Night/Orientation Meeting. Please review the letter, type your name as principal, and place on your letterhead prior to distribution. Students may receive notification copies during homeroom or whatever period you feel is best for distribution.**

**Please share this information with your counselors. Let me know if you have additional questions or need assistance in this process. Thank you for your time, assistance and consideration in this matter.**



Parent Letter-Survey Notification.doc

Dianna Rentie  
Director, Classified Personnel  
Human Resources  
Lee's Summit R-7 School District  
301 N.E. Tudor Road  
Lee's Summit, MO 64086-5702  
(816)986-1129

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## APPENDIX F: PARENT AND STUDENT NOTIFICATION



## Pleasant Lea Middle School

Lee's Summit R-7 School District  
 630 S.W. Persels Road  
 Lee's Summit, MO 64081-2899  
 Phone (816) 986-1175 Fax (816) 986-1225

Principal  
 Mrs. Janette Cooley  
 Assistant Principals  
 Mrs. Kim Fritchie  
 Ms. Gloria Helmer

February 6, 2008

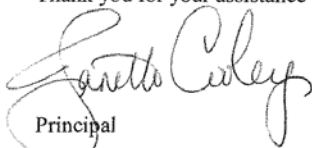
Dear Parents and Eighth Grade Students,

The transition from middle school to high school can be a challenging experience for ninth grade students. As a result, The Lee's Summit School District has approved a request to study *The Comparison of Eighth Grade Student Perceptions of Transition from Middle School to High School*.

We would like to collect information via survey from the district's current eighth grade students (Class 2012) about their perceptions of the transition from middle school to high school. The pre-survey (March 2008) will be administered after the introduction of the eighth grade transition activities. Students participating in the pre-survey (March 2008) will also participate in the post-survey (October 2008) after the introduction of the ninth grade transition activities. This information will help provide the Lee's Summit School District insights into the effectiveness of current transition activities while possibly serving as a resource for planning a standardized transition program.

Completion of the survey is optional. Students, however, are encouraged to participate. Student help and participation in gathering information on the transition from middle to high school in Lee's Summit would be greatly appreciated. Survey participants will remain anonymous. The information collected will only be used for the purpose of the study and within the district to improve programming for ninth grade students in the Lee's Summit School District.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.



Principal





Bernard C. Campbell Middle School  
 1201 N.E. Colbern Rd.  
 Lee's Summit, MO 64086-5816  
 (816) 986-3175 • FAX (816) 986-3245



February 6, 2008

Dear Parents and Eighth Grade Students,

The transition from middle school to high school can be a challenging experience for ninth grade students. As a result, The Lee's Summit School District has approved a request to study *The Comparison of Eighth Grade Student Perceptions of Transition from Middle School to High School*.

We would like to collect information via survey from the district's current eighth grade students (Class 2012) about their perceptions of the transition from middle school to high school. The pre-survey (March 2008) will be administered after the introduction of the eighth grade transition activities. Students participating in the pre-survey (March 2008) will also participate in the post-survey (October 2008) after the introduction of the ninth grade transition activities. This information will help provide the Lee's Summit School District insights into the effectiveness of current transition activities while possibly serving as a resource for planning a standardized transition program.

Completion of the survey is optional. Students, however, are encouraged to participate. Student help and participation in gathering information on the transition from middle to high school in Lee's Summit would be greatly appreciated. Survey participants will remain anonymous. The information collected will only be used for the purpose of the study and within the district to improve programming for ninth grade students in the Lee's Summit School District.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Vicki W. Porter, Ed.D.  
 Principal



## Summit Lakes Middle School

Lee's Summit R-7 School District  
3500 SW Windemere Drive  
Lee's Summit, MO 64082  
Phone: (816) 986-1375 Fax: (816) 986-1435

**Principal**  
Dr. Don Andrews  
**Assistant Principal**  
Kirk Hipple  
**Assistant Principal**  
Dr. Dale Wolff

February 12, 2008

Dear Parents and Eighth Grade Students,

The transition from middle school to high school can be a challenging experience for ninth grade students. As a result, The Lee's Summit School District has approved a request to study *The Comparison of Eighth Grade Student Perceptions of Transition from Middle School to High School*.

We would like to collect information via survey from the district's current eighth grade students (Class 2012) about their perceptions of the transition from middle school to high school. The pre-survey (March 2008) will be administered after the introduction of the eighth grade transition activities. Students participating in the pre-survey (March 2008) will also participate in the post-survey (October 2008) after the introduction of the ninth grade transition activities. This information will help provide the Lee's Summit School District insights into the effectiveness of current transition activities while possibly serving as a resource for planning a standardized transition program.

Completion of the survey is optional. Students, however, are encouraged to participate. Student help and participation in gathering information on the transition from middle to high school in Lee's Summit would be greatly appreciated. Survey participants will remain anonymous. The information collected will only be used for the purpose of the study and within the district to improve programming for ninth grade students in the Lee's Summit School District.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Donald R. Andrews, Ed.D.  
Principal