

The Effects of a Mentor on the Achievement
and Motivation of At-Risk Ninth Graders

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of a mentoring adult on the achievement and motivation of ninth graders who were identified as at risk for failure. The use of early warning indicators such as attendance, discipline, course failures, and grade point averages (GPA) aided with selection. Students who received a D or E as a final grade in any core course, which was defined as English, mathematics, social studies, science, or foreign language, were included in this study. The study applied a quasi-experimental design which consisted of a pretest, utilizing the School Motivation and Learning Strategies Inventory (SMALSI) to determine a baseline low motivation score. Students' credit count and cumulative GPA for the first semester of high school were also included as a baseline. Motivation scores on the SMALSI were compared from the pretest and posttest, along with final credit count for the ninth grade. There were gains in both credit count and motivation scores; however, further research should be considered.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Ninth grade is a crucial time for adolescents, often deemed a make or break year by educators. This is the first time students are required to pass courses required for graduation. Ninth graders are the recipients of the most discipline referrals, lowest grade point averages, and the most failing grades (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010). The struggles that ninth graders face as they transition to high school often lead to disengagement, course failure, grade retention, and their eventual drop out. To minimize the issues that freshman often encounter, schools have implemented the addition of a mentor to positively impact the achievement and motivation of students identified as at risk.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]] (n.d.), the Average Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) has improved from 74% to 82% between 1990 and 2012. Freshmen, in this case, are defined as students who graduate on time with a regular diploma. There continues to be an achievement gap present along the lines of race/ethnicity, with Asian/Pacific Islander students having the highest rates of on time graduation at 93% followed by Caucasian students with 85%. American Indian/Alaska natives and Black/African American students have the lowest on time graduation rates at 68%.

Becoming an at-risk ninth grader does not begin the first day of high school. Data from sixth grade and eighth grade have proven to be extremely valuable in predicting which ninth graders will struggle. Balfanz, Herzog, and MacIver (2007) used multiple early warning indicators, one of which included sixth-grade course failures. They concluded that sixth graders

who earn a failing grade in English or math with an attendance rate below 80% have only a 25% chance of completing high school. Casillas, Robbins, Allen, Kuo, Hanson, and Schmeiser (2012) asserted that eighth-grade achievement has a greater impact on career readiness and college than anything assessed at the high school level.

A variety of factors contribute to the conditions of becoming an at-risk ninth grader. Students who are inadequately prepared for the rigor of high school, have negative peer influences coupled with less parental control, and weaker student-teacher bonds are at significant risk. Neild (2009) provides correlational evidence to support the significance of these issues. The development of mutually respectful and strong relationships with adults often remedies the transition difficulties. Cushman (2006) supports this theory by suggesting that relationship building fosters a sense of belonging for the freshman in their new school community.

The adjustment to high school has been tackled using a variety of interventions to provide support during this tumultuous adolescent period. Schools have programs that range from “freshman academies,” which can be housed in a separate wing or building, to peer mentors that pair freshman with upperclassman, and advisory periods. Ellerbrock and Kiefer (2010) conducted research on the impact of smaller learning communities on the student-teacher relationship. They concluded that incoming ninth graders thrive when they are able to establish a relationship with a school-based adult built on mutual trust and respect. The creation of an intervention for at-risk ninth graders that incorporates the designs of a mentoring program and advisory sessions will be examined in this study.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of a mentoring adult on the achievement and motivation of ninth graders who were identified as at risk for failure compared to on-track ninth graders.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis states that there will be no difference in the motivation or credit counts for at-risk ninth grade students participating in an advisory period with a mentoring adult.

Operational Definitions

The independent variable is the type of intervention: the presence of a mentoring adult to monitor progress of at-risk students versus no intervention. The data for the *no intervention* group will come from the remaining ninth grade population who are assigned to an alphabetical advisory without the mentor. The dependent variables for this study are the credit counts achieved at the conclusion of the freshman year and the score on the Low Motivation (LOMOT) section of the School Motivation and Learning Strategies Inventory (SMALSI).

At-Risk Students

An at-risk student in the study is defined as one who has earned a final grade of a D or E in a core class for the first semester of ninth grade. A core class is defined as English, mathematics, social studies, science, or a foreign language. The students also had at least one early warning indicator. These included absences totaling six or more days for the first semester, four or more discipline referrals, and two or more D's and E's in each of the first two marking periods.

Credit Count

In order to be promoted to sophomore status, a student must have a minimum of six credits at the conclusion of his or her freshman year. Every student is scheduled for up to eight courses for each semester and attends four 86-minute class periods per day on an A-day/ B-day rotation. Every class period counts for 0.5 credits. Therefore, it is possible for four credits to be earned in each of the semesters in courses with a passing grade of D or better.

Motivation

Academic motivation is the desire to acquire information, according to Stroud and Reynolds (2006). Motivation has been linked with academic achievement and reflects a “student’s investment in the process of learning” (Stroud & Reynolds, 2006, p. 10). Comparing the SMALSI pre- and posttest scores with the scale provided for student liabilities (p. 31), a student with a *T*-score of 71 or more has a low motivation (LOMOT) score that is classified as *extremely problematic*. Scoring between 61 and 70 is *moderately problematic* and between 40 and 60 is *no more problematic than for most students*. Scores ranging between 30 and 39 identify the student’s LOMOT score as *less problematic than for most students*. The lowest scoring band of 29 or below is considered *minimally problematic*.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review seeks to explore the importance of the ninth-grade transition, use of early warning systems to identify at-risk students, and a variety of intervention strategies used to support them. Section one provides an overview of the importance of the ninth-grade transition. Section two delves into the use of early warning systems to identify at-risk ninth graders. The third section discusses psychosocial factors that contribute to the success of ninth graders. The fourth section examines interventions that have been used to facilitate the transition from middle to high school, and in section five, a summary is provided.

Navigating the Ninth-Grade Transition

The importance of ninth grade is irrefutable. The inaugural year of high school is considered by researchers to be the make or break year (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010). This is the first time when students are required to pass core classes as part of graduation requirements. In addition, the ninth-grade year has the highest enrollment numbers, yet is plagued by the most failing grades and lowest grade point averages. Traditionally, students from the freshman class have the most discipline referrals and miss the most classes. In 1970, there were three percent fewer tenth graders than ninth graders; yet, by 2000, this number had increased to 11% nationwide (Neild, 2009). This data points to the transition to high school as a hole “where students across the United States are at increased risk of getting stuck” (Neild, 2009, p. 57). Only 20% of freshman who spent more than one year as ninth graders completed high school in six years; the rest became dropouts (Neild, Stoner-Eby, & Furstenberg, 2008).

McCallumore and Sparapani (2010) suggest that there are many concerns that face freshman students, and they can be categorized into either social or academic life. Freshmen are

often ill-prepared for these new social stressors and academic expectations in high school. The concept of earning credits is something that ninth-grade students do not realize is critical for their graduation in four years. Many claim they would have worked harder to earn higher grades had they understood the potential negative impact. The level of classroom rigor and the volume of homework, coupled with worries about getting lost and possibly being bullied by older students, contributed to their ninth-grade uneasiness.

Ninth Grade Challenges

Successfully navigating the hurdle of freshman year requires that educators from pre-K through grade eight prepare students for the academic rigor of ninth grade. High schools do shoulder the weight of organizing the school in such a way to minimize ninth grade stress, staff the finest teachers in freshman classes, and provide curriculum that meets the needs of their students' varied abilities (Neild, 2009). There are four theories outlined with regard to the difficulty ninth grade poses for some students: life course changes, breaking the bonds with middle school friends and teachers, inadequate preparation for high school rigor, and the organization of high school.

Neild (2009) found the entrance to ninth grade serves as a "social marker, signaling to parents that their young person deserves greater independence" (p. 54). Parents enable their children to stay home alone with no adult supervision, sometimes leading to an increase in risk taking for the student. This additional unsupervised time is accompanied by greater peer influence that often works to the detriment of freshman academic success (Neild et al., 2008). When students are in the presence of their peers, they are persuaded to sometimes make poor decisions such as skipping class, not completing homework, or drug and alcohol use.

Middle school and elementary school provide close adult bonds within the school. Both levels of schooling are organized to enable team teaching and interdisciplinary teams, strengthening teacher-student relationships (Neild et al., 2008). Once these students arrive in high school, it is often a shock when their teachers provide less individual attention or know them as well. In Neild's (2009) words, "teachers cut you less slack when you mess up" in high school (p. 49). In contrast, the students who were less attached in middle school may fare better as they move to the high school setting and receive a clean slate.

Cushman (2006) supports this theory by suggesting that teachers design classroom activities that show interest in getting to know their students and in students getting to know each other. Students want to develop mutually respectful and strong relationships with adults. Teachers who recognize a student's effort, struggles, and worries can have a huge impact on students' attitudes about high school. Engaging students in discussion groups, extracurricular activities, or service projects nurtures the development of teacher-student relationships and fosters a sense of belonging to their new high school community.

Preparation for the rigor of high school coursework presents another challenge. The students who failed English or mathematics in middle school become quickly overwhelmed by the academic demands of high school. To be successful in high school mathematics, students must have a firm understanding of fractions, decimals, and signed numbers during the middle grades (Neild, 2009). Neild (2009) asserts that in order to be successful in English, social studies, and science, the ability to comprehend and read fluently is imperative. Secondary-certified teachers are not prepared to teach basic literacy and numeracy—they are trained and expected to teach algebra and literature (Neild et al., 2008). Many students in this situation become frustrated and simply stop working. For example, "in Chicago, students who scored two

or more years below grade level on tests of math or reading had a 50 percent chance of failing a core course and dropping out in ninth grade” (Neild, 2009, p. 60).

Neild’s (2009) final point is that the organization of a high school and the teachers’ allegiance to their respective departments leave minimal time to get to know their students individually. Students pass from class to class with a new teacher. There is not one person or team that has firsthand knowledge of how a student is performing across the board, leading to students’ disengagement and failure.

The four theories outlined by Neild (2009) with regard to the difficulty ninth grade poses for some students were based on correlational evidence, not experimental data. The impact of each cannot be clearly defined; however, inadequate preparation for high school and school organization seem to be the main culprits.

Consequences of Ninth-Grade Failure

When students successfully navigate the academic demands of their transition to high school, they have a high probability of graduating on time in four years (Neild, 2009). Failure to do so will result in an elevated risk of eventually dropping out of high school. In Philadelphia, the above described struggles proved to be so overwhelming that 30% of students would eventually drop out, despite having no failing grades in core classes and adequate attendance in eighth grade. Berger (2013) confirmed this finding: “1.2 million students do not graduate and only 70% earn their high school diploma on time” (p. 86).

The drop out process is a puzzle with a significant piece stemming from ninth-grade difficulties (Roderick, 2006). In Chicago in 2000, 58% of ninth graders were on track at the end of freshman year. Of those students, 81% graduated within four years. Compare this to the 42% that were off track; only 22% of them graduated on time. If a student is on track at the

conclusion of freshman year, he or she is “three and one-half times more likely than off-track students to graduate in four years” (Roderick, 2006, p. 15).

While having only one semester failure elevates the risk of dropping out (Roderick, 2006), this is exacerbated by the fact that many students make the decision to complete or quit high school within the first weeks of their ninth-grade year (Ellerbrock & Kiefer, 2010). Educators must not only identify the students who are at risk but also intervene early on to motivate, assuring promotion to tenth grade and future graduation. When ninth graders encounter academic and social adversity, their potential for dropping out of high school increases.

Predictors of Ninth-Grade Performance

The middle school experience can predict potential pitfalls as students transition to high school. The behaviors exhibited during this time become patterns for high school and post-secondary success. Achievement at the eighth-grade level has been shown to have larger effects on career and college readiness than anything assessed at the high school level, according to Casillas et al. (2012).

Casillas et al. (2012) included a sample of 4,660 students who completed the ACT's, the EXPLORE, and the ENGAGE assessments, which provide achievement and psychosocial scores, respectively. Their work concluded that prior academic achievement is the strongest predictor of a student's future success. Another finding was that psychosocial factors, such as motivation, self-regulation, and social control can be useful for identifying potential at-risk ninth graders from their middle school performance. Therefore, the use of middle school data can identify students who may struggle with the ninth-grade transition.

A longitudinal study over nine years and including 13,000 students revealed that there are indicators that can predict the students who will not graduate from high school with 60% accuracy (Balfanz et al., 2007). These include poor attendance, misbehavior, and sixth-grade course failures. Their studies also concluded that sixth graders who earn a failing grade in English or math with an attendance rate below 80% will have a 75% chance of eventually dropping out of high school.

There are key factors that influence success in middle school which will lead to eventual graduation from high school (Balfanz et al., 2007). Teacher supports, academic pressure felt from adults and students to do their best, and parental involvement were keys to success in middle school and eventually high school. Students also must recognize the utility of the coursework and how it relates to their lives. Lastly, those who were most successful were intrinsically motivated.

Balfanz et al. (2007) focused on middle school students who lived in poverty conditions in urban areas. There were limitations in the research in terms of gender and racial gaps. Interventions that were suggested would need to be tailored to meet the needs of Hispanic students and specifically male students. Regardless of socioeconomic factors, raising pre-high school achievement will pay off in ninth grade.

Using Early Warning Indicators

The creation of early warning systems based on archival data has extensive potential as a predictor of later academic achievement (Casillas et al., 2012). These indicators can be used to identify students who are at risk, having such indicators as attendance below 90%, behavior infractions greater than two, inability to read at grade level by third grade, failure in English or math between sixth and ninth grade, GPA below 2.0, and failure to earn on-time promotion to

10th grade (Hazel, Pfaff, Albanes, & Gallagher, 2014). Those data points are useful; however, they can be enhanced by incorporating the psychosocial characteristics (Hazel, Pfaff, Albanes, & Gallagher, 2014) of motivation, self-regulatory behaviors and social control.

A case study completed by Hazel et al. (2014) was prompted by the “wait and see” (p. 416) approach that is often taken as students transition from middle to high school. A critical and frequently missed window can establish a path for high school success. In response, Hazel et al. conducted a yearlong study called the *Transition Initiative*. They differentiated incoming freshman into one of four “academies” based on their early warning data. The four risk factors they used were: (1) failure of eighth-grade math, (2) failure in eighth-grade language arts, (3) attendance rate less than 90%, and (4) having a suspension or expulsion.

One academy was created for students who were English Language Learners (ELL) and received instruction in English Language Acquisition (ELA). Another academy was for students who were considered college ready; they had zero or one early warning indicators. The other two academies had students with between two and four of the risk factors; one academy chose to work collaboratively and plan, while the other simply complained that they had all of the behavior problems, which the data did not support.

Overall, the academies that had distinct identities, college ready and the ELL programs, showed improvements with a decline of warning indicators. The other academies, without the specific identities and with teacher perceptions that were less supportive, led to an increase in the risk factors: declining attendance, increasing discipline infractions, and poorer academic performance. The research of Hazel et al. (2014) concluded that students entering with levels of risk claimed that, “the relationship with a teacher where they perceived that the teacher cared about them as a whole person as instrumental to their success” (p. 417). It is essential for

schools to intervene immediately for the students identified as at risk, reaching them before they disengage.

Neild's (2009) research in Philadelphia showed that about 50% percent of students who will eventually drop out could be identified using the early warning indicators of poor grades and attendance prior to entering high school. Forty percent of these students could have been identified as early as sixth grade by their discipline records, grades, and attendance. With the increased use of early warning indicators, schools are able to identify students for intervention, focus on problems, and then take action. Using these patterns to address low performance is beneficial to prevent disengagement (Allensworth, 2013).

Attendance is one of the key early warning system data points. Declining attendance often arises because of school disengagement. The perception of less support from both classmates and teachers results in more absences and lower achievement, particularly among boys (De Wit, Karioja, & Rye, 2010). Even though their research focused on the mental health of their ninth graders, the results from De Wit et al. (2010) demonstrated the usefulness of this early warning data.

“Behavioral signs of disengagement (low attendance and misbehavior) and course failures (that both signal and exacerbate disengagement) are high yield predictors of students falling off the graduation track,” (p. 233) concluded Balfanz et al. (2007). The average freshman graduation rate (AFGR), which measures the percent of students who graduate on time with a regular diploma, has increased to 75.5% in 2008-09 from 73.7% in 1990-91 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.). The class of 2008–09 had an AFGR ranging from 56.3% in Nevada to 90.7% in Wisconsin. The wide range of this national data and a mean of 75.5% suggest there still remains a need for programs to “address students’ needs in a way that

promotes their ability to be successful with rigorous curriculum and increases their engagement with the content” (Hazel et al., 2014, p. 418).

The use of early warning systems can predict ninth-grade failure and are useful to high school leadership. Along with these data points, other non-quantifiable factors such as motivation and changing student-teacher relationships make negotiating the transition into high school a challenge for our at-risk students.

Contributing Factors

Early warning indicators provide quantifiable data and are extremely useful, although the incorporation of psychosocial characteristics, such as motivation, relationships, and self-regulatory behaviors, provide a more inclusive picture of the student. Middle and high school students traditionally have lower motivation than their counterparts at the elementary and collegiate level, making the transition between the two levels even more arduous.

Casillas et al. (2012) defined motivation as a “self-regulatory mechanism by which individuals act on prescribed behaviors and implement learning activities and/or pursue goals” (p. 409). This was one of the traits that Berger (2013) measured using the *School Motivation and Learning Strategies Inventory* (SMALSI). Other behaviors, such as test anxiety, organizational skills, and time management were quantified. This test was administered prior to the implementation of a small group counseling intervention for underachieving students. Only four of the 10 subsections of the test were evaluated: time management, test anxiety, organizational techniques, and low academic motivation. Time management and organization assessed student strengths and the remaining two subscales, while low academic motivation and test anxiety assessed student liabilities. Grade point averages, discipline referrals, and attendance were used in conjunction with posttest scores to measure the success of the intervention. The SMALSI

posttest showed significant improvement to the students' motivation, organization, and time management after a small group counseling intervention. In addition, their GPA increased, and the number of discipline referrals and unexcused absences decreased. A limitation to these programs was the amount of time needed to implement 45-minute sessions during the school day. Finally, the student exit survey revealed that students showed a preference for their school counselor to facilitate the group sessions instead of the group leader or counseling intern; they expressed a "need for more positive connections with teachers and adults at school" (Berger, 2013, p. 94).

For students to remain motivated and continue to persist in an academic environment, a feeling of connectedness can be achieved by taking advantage of the supports provided by family, school, and peers. These relationships play key roles in the success of ninth graders, having a powerful impact on achievement.

Chen and Gregory (2009) found that support from parents at home fostered a positive teacher-student relationship. This was true for the low-achieving students selected for their study. The parental involvement or perceived involvement, in combination with a caring teacher, led to higher achievement levels. When the parents expected their children to gain advanced degrees, they were more engaged in the classroom, leading to higher GPAs. In addition, when parents reinforced good grades with rewards or praise, the students rated their teachers as more caring.

Relationships with non-familial adults, such as teachers and counselors, may bring about the most change with at-risk students. Dubois and Silverthorn (2005) conducted research on natural mentoring relationships. Seventy-five percent of their subjects had a mentor and approximately a quarter of them were teachers or school counselors. The students with mentors

had a greater likelihood of finishing high school and attending college. There was a decline in risk taking behavior such as gang membership and fighting. Mentored students were healthier both physically and mentally. Although this study focused on older adolescents and young adults with a naturally occurring mentoring relationship, the results from “formal mentoring relationships have been found to have stronger effects” (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005, p. 522).

Ellerbrock and Kiefer (2010) focused on the impact of smaller learning communities on student-teacher relationships during the transition to high school. The case study included 67 participants, 21 of whom were freshman students. The remaining participants were adults with roles that ranged from director to administrator to teacher. There were three relationships that created a community of care. There was the teacher-to-program relationship that followed the teacher buy-in. Secondly, there was the teacher-to-student relationship where the teacher exhibited “developmentally responsive traits” (Ellerbrock & Kiefer, 2010, p. 401). These instructors had the stamina, energy, excitement, and dedication that it takes to engage freshman. Finally, the program-to-student relationship connected the students to school by increasing their sense of belonging to a community. These relationships exhibit the qualities of trust, care, and respect that are essential for incoming ninth graders.

Neild (2009) agreed that an emphasis on personal relationships between teachers and students enabled students to experience greater “learning gains” (p. 62). When paired with cognitive support, these adults are able to mentor students at risk for ninth-grade retention and guide them into their sophomore year on schedule. Ninth graders often are lacking the academic, social, and life skills necessary to be successful in high school. Providing a variety of interventions will enable freshman to have a seamless transition and timely promotion into their sophomore year.

Preventing Retention through Intervention Programs

“Many high school educators believe strongly that failing a student is an effective intervention” (Roderick, 2006, p. 190). Instead of a failure sending the message that the student needs to get motivated, as many educators believe it will, the student is more likely to continue on and have greater difficulty the next semester. As De Wit et al. (2010) maintain, “Targeted programs that enhance student feelings of connectedness” are important (p. 579). The impact of these programs and specifically a mentoring adult will be examined for a significant impact on promotion rates of ninth graders.

Advisory groups built into schedules foster a sense of community and allow students to build relationships and get academic support. A Chicago-area high school’s advisory program for ninth graders, as described by Lampert (2005), was developed to ensure that every student is well-known at the school, their progress is closely monitored, and all students believe they have both academic and social support. Within two school years, they reduced their ninth-grade retention rate from 37% to 23% and increased extracurricular participation from 64% to 78%. This is an example of how students’ achievement is influenced by an attachment to their school that the advisory program fostered.

There are a variety of ideas with regard to programs that will aid the transition and success of freshman, from separate buildings to interdisciplinary teams to mentors, either student or adult. Some of the interventions involve structural changes, while others simply infuse a person or persons to offer additional support. McCallumore and Sparapani (2010) examined schools that had a Freshman Academy model. In such a school, “the freshman academy can take many physical forms including centers, wings, and houses” (p. 450). However, the common goal is to keep the freshmen separate to ease their transition and optimize success. Students are

able to get acquainted with the more rigorous curricula as they receive more individualized attention in the smaller learning communities. This arrangement is the most invasive of the intervention options, and according to the National Center for Education Statistics, there were 154 ninth-grade only schools during the 2004-2005 school year (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007), rising to 185 for the 2005-2006 school year. These schools reported great success in terms of increased attendance, fewer discipline problems, and academic success.

Despite the success that schools achieved using a Freshmen Academy model, it still proves to have some disadvantages other than the additional cost. Negative concerns are the exclusion of the freshman from school activities and sports. The ninth graders are isolated from the upperclassman and complain that it feels like middle school and that it creates tension among teachers who have loyalties to only the ninth-grade academy (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010). Simply put, many schools describe it as having two freshman years, and the problems that exist in ninth grade simply move to the sophomore year as they assimilate into the larger school population. A less disruptive option that some schools offer is a freshman seminar consisting of support with study skills, organization, time management, social skills, and career planning, to name a few (Hazel et al., 2014).

Student mentors can be a critical component of a high school intervention. Maine East is a high school in the Chicago-area where Lampert (2005) described how advisory classes allow the ninth graders to feel attached to the school. The goals of these advisory classes were to reduce the percentage of ninth-grade failures and increase freshmen participation in school activities. A key element to this transformation was the student mentors. They were utilized to facilitate the weekly advisory lessons. Student mentors worked with the advisories on topics such as study skills, time management, stress management, note and test taking strategies, and

team building. The freshman failure rate dropped from 37% to 23% within the first two years of implementation. The involvement in school activities improved from 72 to 78% during the same timeframe. The student mentors also benefitted from this program. The older students reported that they had “become more responsible and outgoing, more understanding of their teachers and more accepting of differences” (Lampert, 2005, p. 63). Peer mentor programs that foster a close relationship between freshman and upperclassmen produce positive academic and social outcomes, decreasing the ninth grade retention rate.

Older students who have successfully navigated the transition to high school can offer ninth graders their useful perspectives. Cushman (2006) interviewed new freshman students and asked them what adults can do to help them make the transition to high school. Ideas included students receiving firsthand information from high school students visiting them in the eighth-grade classes; middle school teachers can also develop skills such as conflict resolution, facilitating a group discussion, or mentoring a younger student, and demonstrating how to make mutually respectful connections with adults. These are ideas that can be front loaded prior to their arrival.

According to Cushman (2006), high schools can help ninth graders succeed with some changes to existing school structures. The creation of smaller learning communities, grouping ninth graders together in one physical location, incorporating a freshman orientation day to allow them to get adjusted, assigning them an upperclassman student mentor, and building advisory groups into their schedules will support freshman during the transition. These interventions require district, cluster, and school leaders to facilitate the alterations to the calendar, schedule, and school environment.

Relationships with non-familial adults, such as teachers and school counselors, will often bring about the most change in at-risk youth. Holt, Bry, and Johnson (2008) conducted a study with 44 students who were characterized as at risk. They were randomly placed in a treatment or control group. The treatment group was part of a five-month mentoring program and the control group received no intervention. The goal of their research was to evaluate a school-based adult mentoring program on the behaviors, academic performance, and cognition of at-risk ninth graders. The mentees spent between 20 and 30 minutes per week with their mentor. There were significant positive results in terms of school belonging, decision making, discipline, and perceived teacher support. There were no significant changes in grades or attendance between the treatment and control groups. Limitations of this study were the amount of time that was spent with the students which was only 20-30 minutes for between two and 13 weeks (average of eight sessions). The subjects were primarily Latino and African American from an urban background. Therefore, these results may not transfer to other demographics.

Holt et al. (2008) based their study in the foundation of Bandura's social cognitive theory, which asserts that engagement, learning and academic achievement have "triadic reciprocity" (p. 299). This simply means that there is a relationship between the personal, behavioral, and environmental influences for students. Variables such as perceived competence, self-efficacy, decision making, sense of belonging, connectedness, attendance, parental aspirations, and adult support at school were included in their study. These support both the social and cognitive part of Bandura's theory. As their results demonstrated, an intervention with an adult mentor will positively influence a student's school engagement and ultimately his or her academic trajectory.

Summary

In review, there are numerous reasons that ninth grade is considered such a critical transition for students, particularly for those who are deemed at risk. Middle school performance can be predictive of future high school academic pitfalls. Many factors contribute to a difficult transition and potential retention in ninth grade, ranging from reduction of parental supervision to inadequate course background and poor attendance. Keeping students motivated as they reach high school and establishing strong student-teacher relationships are elements that must be considered to prevent at-risk students from failing ninth grade and eventually dropping out of high school. An intervention that has shown to have positive results is the addition of a non-familial mentoring adult. The subsequent chapters will focus on the impact of a mentoring adult on the motivation and achievement of at-risk ninth graders.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The study was conducted to determine the impact that a non-familial mentoring adult would have on the motivation and achievement levels of ninth graders identified as at risk. The hypothesis was that achievement and motivation would improve with the addition of a mentoring adult.

Design

The study utilized a quasi-experimental design, which consisted of a pretest, utilizing the School Motivation and Learning Strategies Inventory (SMALSI) to determine a baseline low motivation score. Students' credit count and cumulative grade point average (GPA) for the first semester of high school were also included as a baseline. The study spanned an 18-week semester, late January through mid-June. Grades were monitored at the interim periods and the conclusion of the third and fourth marking periods. Final credit counts and the SMALSI was re-administered at the conclusion of the semester.

Participants

The participants in this study are ninth-grade students who attend a comprehensive public high school in a suburb of a major Mid-Atlantic metropolitan area. The student body consists of approximately 1,800 students in grades nine through 12. The median household income of this area is \$127,710 compared to \$74,149 for the state, according to the United States Census Bureau (2010).

The students were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The intentional focus for high schools in this district is for every student to pass the ninth grade, which requires earning a minimum of six credits out of a possible eight in their freshman year. Therefore, at the

conclusion of the first semester, transcripts and attendance records were reviewed. The students who received a D or E as a final grade in any core course, which was defined as English, mathematics, social studies, science, or foreign language, were included in this study. This consisted of 16 ninth-grade students; however, only 14 participated. Of the remaining two students, one opted out of the voluntary program, and the other has withdrawn from high school.

The students in the study consisted of seven males and seven females. All students were Caucasian with the exception of one Hispanic student and one Black/African American student. Two of the students had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and one student was of Limited English Proficiency (LEP). She was not a native speaker, yet her parents waived their rights to any services. Only one student was economically eligible to receive free and reduced meals (FARMS).

Table 1 shows how the participants compare to the entire ninth-grade population of the school. The participants had GPAs that were substantially lower for every subgroup, other than the Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS), which only had one member. The attendance rates for the participants and each subgroup were also lower except for the Hispanic, FARMS, and African American, which also consisted of only one student.

Table 1

Ninth Grade Population and Participants Attendance and GPA Comparison

9th Grade Population	All Students	Asian	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	Pacific Islander	African American	White	FARMS	LEP	Special Education
Enrollment	438	13	27	16	1	16	365	14	4	27
Enrollment %		3.0	6.2	3.7	0.2	3.7	83.3	3.2	0.9	6.2
Attendance %	96.9	98.74	97.43	97.85	98.39	96.81	96.76	95.58	97.99	95.54
GPA	3.31	3.66	3.36	3.37	4.17	2.44	3.34	2.44	3.40	2.65
9th Grade Participants	All Students	Asian	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	Pacific Islander	African American	White	FARMS	LEP	Special Education
Enrollment	14	0	1	0	0	1	12	1	1	2
Enrollment %		--	7.14	--	--	7.14	85.71	7.14	7.14	14.29
Attendance %	93.13	--	97.28	--	--	98.91	92.30	97.28	97.28	97.28
GPA	1.54	--	2.50	--	--	0.78	1.44	2.50	2.50	1.36

Eighth-grade data, which included the early warning indicators of attendance, discipline referrals, and marking period course failures, are displayed in Table 2. Eleven of the 14 students missed more than six days in the school year. Only one student had significant disciplinary events. Thirteen of the 14 students had two or more marking periods with two or more course failures.

Table 2

Grade 8 Early Warning Indicator Data

Student #	Absent		Marking	Marking	Marking	Marking
			Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4
	>= 6 days	Referrals	>=2	>=2	>=2	>=2
		/=6	Course Failures	Course Failures	Course Failures	Course Failures
1	●			●	●	●
*2	--	--	--	--	--	--
3			●			●
4	●		●		●	●
5	●	●	●	●	●	●
6	●		●	●		
7			●	●		●
8	●		●	●	●	●
9	●		●	●	●	●
10	●		●	●	●	●
11	●			●	●	●
12	●		●	●	●	●
13	●					●
14	●		●	●	●	●

* Student 2 was new to the school system

Participants' final grades for sixth-grade language arts and mathematics are displayed in Table 3, with mean scores of 80.9 and 82.1%, respectively. In comparison, the final grades for eighth-grade English showed a mean of 70.9%, a decline of 10% in two years. The participants had a mean of 68.6% in mathematics for Grade 8, a drop of 13.5% from sixth grade.

Table 3

Grade 6 and 8 Final Grades for Mathematics and English/Language Arts

Student #	Grade 6	Grade 6	Grade 8	Grade 8
	Math Final Grade	English Final Grade	Math Final Grade	English Final Grade
1	90	88	81	84
*2	--	--	--	--
3	82	82	67	68
4	82	87	72	74
5	85	86	67	77
6	82	87	69	74
7	84	75	61	61
8	73	74	59	55
9	78	74	55	63
10	86	82	81	69
11	85	81	73	73
12	90	77	66	83
13	87	89	83	79
14	76	77	61	60
Mean:	82.1	80.9	68.6	70.9

* Student 2 was new to the school system

Ninth grade data for semester one, including the early warning indicators of attendance, discipline referrals, and grades of D or E, are displayed in Table 4. Sixty-four percent of the participants were absent six or more days during this time. Twenty-nine percent of the students were absent twelve or more days during semester one. Student five continues to receive discipline referrals and had four or more at the midpoint of the school year. Thirteen of the 14 participants had two or more D's and E's for marking period one and two.

Table 4

Grade 9 Early Warning Indicator Data- Semester 1

Student #	Absent ≥ 6 days	Absent ≥ 12 days	Referral Events ≥ 4	Marking Period 1 D's and E's ≥ 2	Marking Period 2 D's and E's ≥ 2	Year to Date D's and E's ≥ 2	Year to Date D's and E's ≥ 4
1	●			●	●	●	●
2				●	●	●	●
3	●			●	●	●	●
4				●	●	●	●
5			●	●	●	●	●
6	●						
7	●	●		●	●	●	●
8	●	●		●	●	●	●
9	●	●		●	●	●	●
10	●			●	●	●	●
11	●	●		●	●	●	●
12				●	●	●	●
13				●	●	●	●
14	●			●	●	●	●

Instrumentation

The School Motivation and Learning Strategies Inventory (SMALSI) has been tested for reliability and validity (Buros Institute of Mental Measurements, 2007). This was used to

measure the change in a student's motivation from the onset to the conclusion of the mentoring program. The SMALSI has three forms, one for children aged 8-12, one for teenagers aged 13-18, and one for college-aged students (Stroud & Reynolds, 2006). All of the participants are over 13, so the teen form was utilized. The self-reporting inventory provides scores for 10 subscales, seven identify strengths of the student, and three identify liabilities. For the purpose of this study, only the Low Academic Motivation (LOMOT) was used. The alpha coefficient for the LOMOT subscale is .83, supporting the reliability.

In addition to the SMALSI subscale, the students' credit counts at the conclusion of the first ninth-grade semester were gathered. The maximum that can be earned each semester is four credits. Students need a minimum of six credits to be promoted to sophomore status. Participants' credit counts ranged from 1.5 to 4.0 credits for the first semester, as is shown in Table 5. Their GPA are also recorded, ranging from 0.5 to 2.5 with a mean of 1.54.

Grades were informally monitored weekly during advisory sessions and during voluntary afterschool homework help sessions. Grades were logged when interim reports and report cards were distributed to track progress. Attendance in weekly advisory sessions was recorded, along with any additional time that students sought out mentor for assistance.

Table 5

Credit Count and Grade Point Average

Student #	Credit Count End S1	Cumulative GPA
1	3.5	1.6
2	3.5	1.5
3	4	2.5
4	3.75	1.71
5	2	0.78
6	4	2.5
7	2	1.0
8	4	1.75
9	4	1.33
10	3.25	1.81
11	2	1.4
12	4	1.3
13	4	1.9
14	1.5	0.5

Procedure

Once the participants were identified using the early warning indicators, credit counts, and GPA data, a meeting was held with the principal. At that point, the decision was made to schedule these students into a new advisory class with the mentor for the remainder of the school year. Currently, students are enrolled in an alphabetical advisory period based on their

matriculation. A letter describing the purpose of the new advisory was sent to all participants' parents and/or guardians (see Addendix A). There was an option for participants to opt out of the schedule change.

Advisory sessions are scheduled on Fridays after the first period class, usually three to four times per month. The schoolwide lessons are planned by the counseling department; however, the mentor was given leeway to design sessions specifically for the participants. There were a total of 13 advisory sessions scheduled from early February through the middle of May. In addition to the 30-minute advisory periods, students have the option to stay after school for 50-minute homework help sessions every Wednesday and/or Thursday.

Students were scheduled individually to complete the SMALSI during the first week of the study. This provided time for the mentor to explain the instrument and what the scores would be used for. All participants were engaged and responded to every question on the tool.

Communication and discovering what motivates the students were vital to the success of this mentoring program. At the initial meeting, one of the activities was for the participants to sign up for a free communication application. This would allow the mentor to text students reminders of upcoming afterschool sessions, special events, and materials needed for the advisory session. During session two, when the discussion addressed what motivates students to perform, the most common answers were food or money. This demonstrated that the participants "tend toward an external locus of control and require external contingencies to push them to perform academically" (Stroud, & Reynolds, 2006, p. 38). The identification of food as a motivator became central to promoting participation in various relationship building initiatives.

During the weekly advisory period, students received grade reports. The mentor met with each student to discuss progress, email teachers, and set work completion goals for the

upcoming week. Students were paired up to complete common missing assignments and tutoring opportunities arose out of these pairings. For a complete list of advisory dates and activities, see Addendum B.

Weekly, there were incentives sent out via text. Examples ranged from finding a math formula, the answering of a fun fact, or simply bringing their student agenda completed with assignments for the day to the mentor's office for review. Every Friday, the students who were in attendance would receive a small ticket. These would be collected, and at the end of a period two tickets would be drawn for a treat. This frequent communication and incentives facilitated the building of a positive rapport with the mentor.

As the interval expanded, students developed a comfort level to seek out the mentor for assistance during lunch, at the homework help sessions, and periodically during the school day. Typically, these visits were related to schoolwork; however, an occasional issue with a teacher may have required some adult guidance, organizational support, or sometimes simply to share some news.

As stated earlier, the schoolwide advisory sessions had planned topics. However, the assignment of a mentoring adult who could differentiate the advisory period may have a greater impact on their motivation and achievement. Since this is a homogenous group, the mentor must provide adequate direction to assure the 14 students make the most of the sessions. Redirection is often needed when a group is composed of at-risk students who share common struggles.

At the conclusion of the advisory lessons, the participants completed the SMALSI to receive a post motivation score. Finally, at the close of the semester, credit counts and GPA were reviewed in order to determine the impact that mentoring adult had on their achievement.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact that a non-familial mentoring adult would have on the motivation and achievement levels of ninth graders identified as at risk.

A *t*-test for paired subjects was conducted on the credits earned for the first and second semesters. In addition, the *T* score for the LOMOT subscore from the SMALSI was analyzed for the 14 at-risk mentored students. The results are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Pre and Post Credit Count and LOMOT Scores for Mentored At-Risk Ninth-Grade Students

Variable	Semester	Mean	N	Standard Deviation	<i>t</i>	Significance
Credit	1	3.3	14	0.94	12.85	0.000*
Count	2	6.6	14	1.57		
LOMOT	1	53.9	14	10.83	1.81	0.094
	2	47.1	14	9.37		

P < 0.000

The *t*-test was statistically significant for the final credit count, $p < .0000$, and therefore, the null hypothesis, that there will be no difference in the credit counts for at-risk ninth-grade students participating in an advisory period with a mentoring adult, was rejected. However, there was not a significant difference in the motivation, which supports the null hypothesis. These results and their implications are discussed in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine if a mentoring adult would have an impact on at-risk ninth-grade students' levels of motivation and achievement. The study utilized a quasi-experimental design, which consisted of a pretest, utilizing the School Motivation and Learning Strategies Inventory (SMALSI) to determine a baseline low motivation (LOMOT) score. Students' credit count for the first semester of high school was also included as a baseline measure.

The null hypothesis that there will be no difference in the credit counts for at-risk ninth-grade students participating in an advisory period with a mentoring adult was rejected. However, the null hypothesis was supported for the motivation score, although it was close to significance level. This suggests a possible type II error.

Implications of Results

Student gains in credit counts are to be expected as the school year progresses. The importance of on-time promotion from ninth grade increases a student's probability of graduating within four years. As Roderick (2006) found, when students are on track at the end of ninth grade, they are three and a half times as likely to graduate on time. Mentoring programs have been utilized to increase attendance, decrease discipline issues, and improve achievement. The stress of the ninth-grade transition often leads to disengagement and declining motivation. The addition of a mentoring adult can fill the void as students leave the nurturing environments of elementary and middle school. Students who were assigned a mentor and took advantage of the guidance offered showed increases in motivation, grade point averages, and credit counts.

Mentoring is not a concept that has a termination date. These students will continue to require guidance to continue advocating for themselves.

As the students involved in this advisory mentoring program transition to the tenth grade, they will continue to require support. Three of the students who did not earn a minimum of six credits will be retained, and the four students who have between 6.0 and 6.5 credits will be placed in an existing intervention advisory group with their tenth-grade cohort. The seven students who have accumulated 7.0 or more credits will return to their original advisory group organized alphabetically by grade. The cumulative GPAs will be reviewed at the beginning of the fall semester, and any student who is below the 2.0 threshold will be assigned a mentor. This is an additional program in which teachers volunteer to work with a student who has been identified as struggling academically. On average, this program supports an additional 80 students from grades 10 through 12. Nine of the students in this study are eligible for this program.

Two of the students who have not been promoted were provided information for summer school registration for credit recovery. This is not mandatory, and if they choose not to attend, they will repeat the failed courses during the upcoming school year. In addition, these students were both disciplined for two drug offenses during this experiment. They are required to complete mandatory drug education classes provided by the school system. After the second offense, they each received two days of out of school suspension.

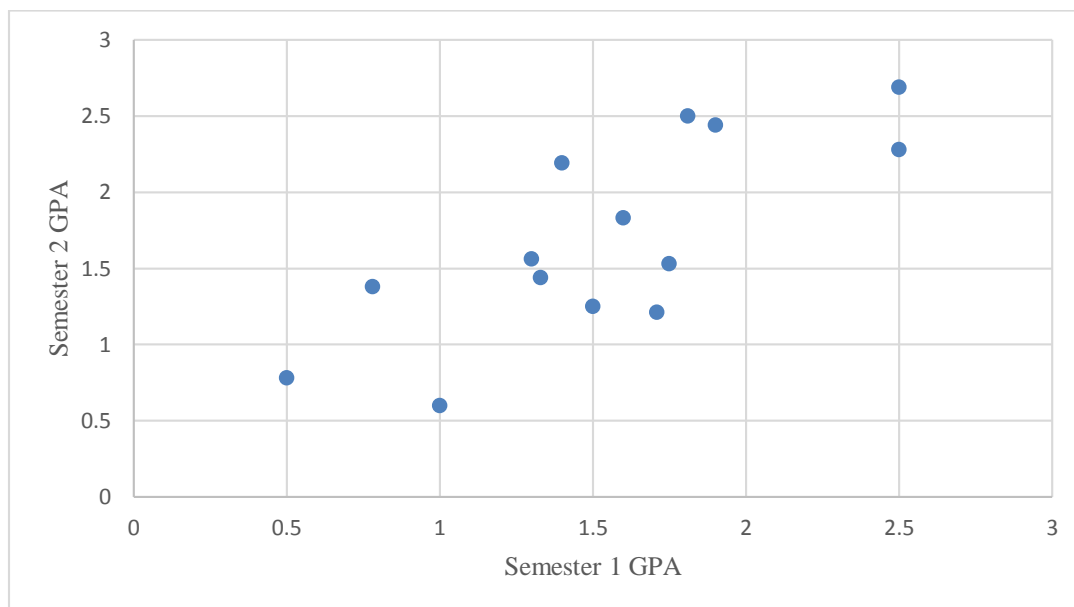
Finally, the third student who will be retained earned only 2.5 credits out of a possible 8.0 credits this school year. He will be unable to recover enough credits to be promoted. During

this study, his attendance was declining, and he made numerous threats to harm himself. School resources were notified and they are working with the parent to acquire mental health treatment.

The average gain in credit count was 3.30 credits for the second semester, and it was 3.25 for the first semester. The mean of the students' cumulative GPAs increased from 1.54 to 1.69 at the end of the ninth grade year with 71% of the students increasing their overall GPA (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Cumulative GPA Comparison



Threats to Validity

Many variables outside of the mentoring time may have influenced the motivation and the achievement of the subjects, such as attendance in advisory, individual circumstances, family involvement, natural maturation, and additional time with some subjects.

During the advisory period, attendance was logged, and only two students were present for each of the 14 weekly sessions. Other students missed anywhere from one to five of the 33-minute advisory sessions. Some of these absences were for the full day, while others were due to student schedules that included a return trip from the technology school during our meeting times. The two students who were cited in the aforementioned drug offenses were off of school grounds during the advisory time engaging in this illegal behavior.

A number of the students had unique circumstances that may have enhanced or interfered with their mentoring experience. One of the subjects moved to this high school prior to the beginning of ninth grade. This particular school has a low mobility rate, and most of the students have known each other since preschool, making it difficult for a new student to find his or her niche. Another student is not a native English speaker, yet her parents refused to accept any language services for the student. Student 8 was an attendance problem in middle school and continues with a pattern of excessive absences. Parents were contacted and never returned phone calls or emails requesting a conference. At that point, the student was referred to the pupil personnel worker and a home visit was conducted to investigate the reasons for the absences. Finally, another subject was hospitalized during the fall semester for mental health issues. She missed approximately six weeks of the first semester of high school. The personal issues that she was working through interfered with the transition to high school, subsequently leading to a loss of two full credits. She worked very hard during the second semester to earn all four credits to assure her promotion. Each student had a story, and having an adult to advocate for what he or she needed benefitted him or her, even if it did not equate to higher grades.

Family involvement is a variable that cannot be controlled. Some parents were in contact with teachers, counselors, and mentor on a regular basis, while other parents were unresponsive to communication or lacked follow through on consequences. In a rare case, a parent ignored the substance abuse problem for which the student received disciplinary action.

As the school year progressed, students who began the year as 14-year olds have begun turning 15 or 16 in one case. The natural process of maturing, brain development, and life experiences is also a variable that existed outside the mentoring time. During the 18 weeks of this study, a number of subjects sought out assistance from the mentor for a variety of reasons. Some students simply wanted to talk and eat lunch, others wanted homework help, requested assistance with contacting a teacher, or looked-for advice about their part-time job. The additional time spent with these students had an influence on their achievement and motivation that was unmeasurable.

Relationships to Literature

The subjects who exhibited signs of disengagement, poor attendance, and misbehavior did fall off the promotion mark for freshman to sophomore status. This supports the research by Balfanz et al. (2007). One of the students who lacked the six credits needed for promotion had excessive absenteeism, and the other two students had numerous disciplinary infractions. Without continued support, these students will continue to disengage and achievement will further drop, especially for males (De Wit et al., 2010).

The students who sought out extra time and assistance had LOMOT scores that declined on average of 9.5 points compared to the average decrease of 3.4 for the group. In addition, the subgroup had an increase in their GPAs of 0.36 for the second semester compared to the overall

mean increase of 0.15 for the mentored group. One final improvement for the subgroup that sought out additional time with the mentor was an average credit gain of 3.75 compared to the mean gain of 3.30 for the experimental group. This lends support to the findings of Berger (2013) that connectedness in a school environment has a powerful impact on achievement.

In the future, reviewing student performance in math and English during sixth and eighth grade will enable schools to identify incoming at-risk ninth-grade students at the beginning of the school year. This study intervened at the conclusion of the first semester when motivation and achievement were already declining. Many of these students had already failed to receive credit in English or mathematics for the first semester. They were underprepared for the rigor of high school coursework, which led to frustration and disengagement (Neild et al., 2008).

Implications for Future Research

The topic of ninth-grade achievement has a rich research base. Findings from this study suggest changes for subsequent research. The time spent with the subjects, 33 minutes per week, may not have been sufficient to have significant results for their motivation levels. Due to the guidelines for scheduling students, the only available time that would allow them to maintain a full course load was to schedule the mentoring during an existing advisory period in their schedule. A seminar period could be established at the beginning of the year where each student would be eligible to earn 0.25 credits, compared to an academic course that yields 0.50 credits. The additional time would allow a mentor to provide more support, which could improve the at-risk students' motivation and connectedness to the school and have a positive impact on their

achievement. Since these students are already prone to credit loss, the seminar period would support accruing credits in core classes and thus outweighs the loss of the 0.25 credit.

A future mentor group that was larger in size, between 20 and 24 students, may prove to have more significant results. The constraints of the advisory period that was being used for mentoring time would only allow for a group of 14 or 15, the typical size of all advisory groups. Although Berger (2013) found small intervention group size does benefit students, the impact of any potential negative student behaviors on results of the small experimental group are more evident.

Afterschool homework sessions were voluntary for the students in the mentoring group. For future endeavors, perhaps there are mandatory sessions of two per month. This would equalize the time spent with students and increase validity of the results. As mentioned earlier, the students who spent additional time with the mentor had a greater increase in their motivation post score. If all students had an equal amount of afterschool time, this would control an otherwise extraneous variable.

One final idea that arose from the LOMOT scores was the decline in motivation for students who were involved in drug use. The three students who had a LOMOT score that increased were the students who were cited for drug violations during school hours. Perhaps a study with at-risk ninth graders that required an initial drug use survey as a baseline, along with the SMALSI, would allow the researcher to separate drug use from overall motivation. Following these students throughout the course of the year would also allow researchers to see the impact the self-reported recreational drug use has on their achievement and motivation.

Conclusion

The results of the study indicate that achievement increases when a mentoring adult is assigned to at-risk ninth graders. Not only did they earn more credits, but they had an increase in their cumulative GPAs. There were a number of students who had an increase in their motivation; however, the increase was not enough to be statistically significant. With an increase in time spent with the students and additional controls in place, a mentoring program for at-risk ninth graders is a valuable investment that will yield higher on-time graduation rates.

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Appendix A

Parent Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian:

In an effort to more fully meet the needs of our students, [REDACTED] has complete staff of certified teachers who stand ready to assist your son/daughter in dealing with a wide range of issues, including those of academics, attendance and discipline.

Your child has been identified to participate in a [REDACTED] Advisory for the third marking period to enhance their performance at [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], School Performance Coach, will be creating an in-house Mentoring program to address the specific needs of your student. The program will focus on note-taking, study and test-taking strategies, time management and improving motivation. Your student will meet with [REDACTED] weekly during the regularly scheduled school-wide Advisory period for third marking period. In addition, every Wednesday and Thursday students can receive help with homework, tests, projects and other assignments afterschool during regularly scheduled Teacher Help Days (2:10 p.m.-3:00 p.m.).

In order to focus on your students' unique needs, they will complete a self-report inventory designed to assess 10 areas that are associated with academic motivation and learning and study strategies. The SMALSI (School Motivation and Learning Strategies Inventory) will be administered in early February and will take between 20-30 minutes to complete. The scores that the students achieve will be used only to guide the Advisory session lessons and are not part of their permanent school record.

The first Advisory meeting of the [REDACTED] advisory group will be **Friday February 12, 2016 in the cafeteria**, during our normally scheduled Advisory period.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to opt out of this Advisory group, please contact [REDACTED]. We appreciate you and your student's participation in the [REDACTED] Advisory group. Together, we will make a difference!

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Principal

[REDACTED]

Appendix B:

Advisory Dates and Activities

Advisory Date	Activities
February 12, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Icebreaker Activity. Review transcripts for semester 1. Reflect on individual performance. Sign up for REMIND app.
February 19, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstormed a definition for “motivation”. What motivates you? SMALSI pre-test administered.
February 26, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade report conferences with mentor. Math tutoring by mentor. Time to work on missing assignments.
March 4, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preview of upcoming STAR Week activities (<i>Students Taking Action Responsibly</i>). This was a schoolwide advisory lesson. Grade report conferences with mentor.
March 11, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSAT scores received. Reviewed scores and completed a reflection. Schoolwide advisory lesson for grades 9-11. Grade report conferences with mentor.
March 18, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Literacy Advisory Lesson- Schoolwide advisory lesson. Grade report conferences with mentor.

April 1, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug Awareness Lesson – Schoolwide advisory lesson. • Grade report conferences with mentor.
April 7, 2016*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAR Week Advisory Lesson- “Celebrate You” (*Thursday Lesson). • Grade report conferences with mentor.
April 15, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Verifications for 2016-17 School year. • Conference for students to plan future coursework. • Grade report conferences with mentor.
April 22, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SGA class elections-Schoolwide advisory activity. • Grade report conferences with mentor. • Time to work on missing assignments.
April 29, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade report conferences with mentor. • Math tutoring by mentor. • Time to work on missing assignments.
May 6, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade report conferences with mentor. • Math tutoring by mentor. • Time to work on missing assignments. • Summer school registration distributed for semester 1 credit recovery.
May 13, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final advisory session • SMALSI posttest • Grade report conferences with mentor. <i>These continued during the remainder of the school year, although informally.</i>