

The Impact of Mentoring on School Success of At-Risk Youth

by

Sara E. Collis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Education

November 2019

Goucher College

Graduate Programs in Education

Table of Contents

List of Tables	i
Abstract	ii
I. Introduction	1
a. Statement of the Problem	2
b. Statement of Research Hypothesis	3
c. Operational Definitions	3
II. Literature Review	5
a. Characteristics of Students from Non-Traditional Homes	5
b. Types of Non-Traditional Homes	6
c. Issues Faced by Students from Non-Traditional Homes and At-Risk Youth	6
d. Assessing Needs of Students from Non-Traditional Homes	9
i. Identification of Students	9
ii. A Team Approach	10
iii. Tools for Assessment	11
e. Interventions to Support Students from Non-Traditional Homes	13
i. Basic Needs and Legal Interventions	13
ii. Academic Interventions	15
iii. Behavioral Interventions	17
f. Long Term Implications for Students from Non-Traditional Homes	19

i.	Promoting Resilience in Children Who Live in Non-traditional Homes	19
ii.	Impacting Post-Secondary Adjustment for Children in Non-traditional homes	20
III.	Methods	22
a.	Design	23
b.	Participants	23
c.	Data Collection/Instruments	23
d.	Procedure	25
IV.	Results	27
V.	Discussion	39
	References	44
	Appendix A	47
	Appendix B	49
	Appendix C	51
	Appendix D	54

List of Tables

1. Descriptive Statistics for Attendance, Grades and Behavior before and after the Check-in Intervention (Treatment group only, n=9)	28
2. Results of t-tests for Dependent Samples Comparing Mean Attendance, Grades, and Behavior for students in the Treatment (NT family) Group Before and During the Intervention	29
3. Post Intervention Reports and Changes in Whether Respondents Felt that their Grades Reflect Ability Disaggregated by Group	31
4. Descriptive Statistics of Ratings and Gains (post-pre ratings) of Four Factors Impacting Attendance, Grades and Behavior, Disaggregated by Groups.	32
5. Descriptive Statistics for Ratings of Goal Achievement (Treatment Group only)	38

List of Figures

1. Attendance Gains	35
2. Grades Gains	36
3. Rules Gains	37

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if students who live in non-traditional homes would increase their school success measures (improved attendance, behavior, and grades) after participating in a check-in/monitoring intervention. Data examined included students' attendance records, office referrals, and students' grades and work completion rates. This study applied a one group quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design to compare these variables before and after the first five weeks of the intervention. Statistically significant gains were seen in the areas of attendance and behavior, so hypotheses 1 and 3 were rejected. Mean attendance rates went up by 26.493 which is a percent increase by 50.35% and mean referral rates decreased by 4.223 which is 92.69% decrease. Improvements were seen in all areas assessed, although work completion and grades (percentage correct on work completed) did not improve statistically significantly, so hypothesis 2 was retained. Research in this area should continue as there is little information available regarding interventions for students residing in non-traditional homes.

THE IMPACT OF MENTORING ON SCHOOL SUCCESS OF AT-RISK YOUTH

CHAPTER 1

Overview

Increasing numbers of students across the country fall into the category of at-risk youth. Within the category of at-risk youth, students who live in non-traditional homes or who are homeless often are overlooked in terms of the need for support. It is imperative that educators understand the characteristics of these students in order to implement strategies to help them overcome the adversities they face and offer support for them to succeed in school.

Over time in America, concepts regarding family structure have changed. Traditional families, consisting of biological parents and children, no longer are the majority within the country (Cananaugh & Huston, 2006). Many children now live in non-traditional homes which can include, but are not limited to foster care, being raised by a single parent, living with a relative other than a biological parent such as a grandparent, aunt and/or uncle, or living on their own. Such settings also can be associated with problems when aspects of students' non-traditional homes place children at-risk for academic, behavioral, and social concerns. Many factors, such as Socioeconomic Status (SES), the quality of relationships or community support, or living in non-traditional homes, can impact students' cognitive development and social adjustment. Studies, such as that reported by Powers, Fullerton, Schmidt, Geenen, Oberweiser-Kennedy, Dohn, J., and Blakeslee, (2018) suggest that students who often are considered the most at risk are those who have a high mobility rate due to factors such as foster care and frequent moving between family members, live in non-traditional homes, are of low

socioeconomic status, and are homeless. Additionally, McNeal (1999) reported findings which indicated that children in non-traditional homes may struggle to attend school regularly, lack motivation to learn or focus while in school, and often lack the social and behavioral skills required to experience success in school. These students require supports to address their academic, behavioral, and attendance needs, and these supports might be best and most consistently provided within the school setting.

In her role as a Special Education teacher, this researcher was particularly interested in helping students whose non-traditional family arrangements might be associated with negative effects on their success at school.

Statement of the Problem

Research such as that reported by Leonard & Gudino (2016), Powers et al. (2018), and McNeal (1999), indicates that children residing in non-traditional homes often experience attendance problems and have social or behavioral needs. These children could benefit from interventions to help them experience improved academic and behavioral success. The researcher wished to learn whether a daily check-in/mentoring system would help increase students' school attendance, behavior in school, and overall grades, presumably due to feeling connected and cared about. An intervention (described in Chapter III) was implemented to create connections between students who live in non-traditional homes and a teacher who provided daily check-ins and helped students develop and work towards attainable goals for attendance and academic and behavioral success at school.

Hypotheses

ho1: attendance rate before intervention= attendance rate during intervention

ho2: academic success (assignment completion rates and average grades) before intervention= academic success during intervention

ho3: behavior ratings (office referral rate) before intervention= behavior ratings (office referral rate) during intervention

Operational Definitions

The **independent variable** in this study was a daily check-in and mentoring system that occurred in the homeroom to which participating students were assigned. Student participants who lived in non-traditional homes met with the homeroom teacher for a daily check-in and developed and worked on meeting personalized goals related to behavior, academics, and/or attendance during the six-week intervention.

The **dependent variables** in this study were student attendance in school, academic success as measured by assignment completion and grades, and behavior in school as measured by office referrals.

Attendance

For the purpose of this study, attendance before and during the treatment was calculated by dividing the number of days in attendance for the fourth quarter by the number of school days in the fourth quarter and comparing that to the number of days in attendance in the five-week treatment period divided by the number of total days in the five-week treatment period.

Non-Traditional Homes

For purposes of this study, non-traditional homes are homes in which students have a non-traditional living arrangement such as foster care, a single-parent family, or have a guardian who is not the biological parent of the child.

Assignment Completion

Assignment completion rates refer to the comparison of the fourth quarter and five- week intervention periods in the same manner that attendance/absences were calculated. Work completion rates were calculated by dividing the number of completed assignments by the total number of assignments in each period.

Grades

The researcher compared the grades (in a percentage) on non-weighted grades for the fourth quarter, with the student's grades (in a percentage) during the five-week treatment period.

Behavior

The researcher compared the mean weekly number and type of office referrals for behaviors such as such as disruption, personal electronics usage, and disrespect, that occurred during the fourth quarter of the previous year to the mean weekly number of referrals occurring during the five-week intervention period.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review examines issues that are faced by students who live in non-traditional homes, and their effects on student's academic success. Section one reviews the characteristics of at-risk students in non-traditional homes, including a discussion of types of non-traditional homes, the way in which students from these non-traditional homes present in school, and the issues that these students face. Section two examines issues related to assessing the needs of students in non-traditional homes such as the identification of students, the need for a team approach, and different tools used for assessment. Section three describes interventions applicable to students who live in non-traditional homes, including interventions related to their basic needs, legal interventions, academic interventions, behavioral interventions, and creating interventions to aid in academic success. Section four discusses long-term implications for students from non-traditional homes, including promoting resilience and offering support for their post-secondary adjustment.

Characteristics of Students from Non-Traditional Homes

Increasing numbers of classrooms across the nation include at-risk students from non-traditional homes. It is important for educators to understand the characteristics of these students to enable them to address the needs these students present in an effective manner. The section below includes a discussion of types of non-traditional homes from which students come, the way in which students from these non-traditional homes present in school, and examples of issues that these students face.

Types of Non-Traditional Homes

Over time in America, the concept of the family structure has changed. The perception of “family” has evolved from considering a nuclear family as the norm, to including non-traditional homes when defining family structure. When defining family structure, Sanson and Lewis (2001) assert that when asking about a student’s living arrangement, it is no longer sufficient to identify the ages of the individuals within the household, but also to identify the relationship of those individuals to the child. In order to identify the circumstances of the child as well as possible risk factors that may affect the child, it is important that a distinction is made between students who are living in a traditional setting in which both biological parents are present, and students who are living in a non-traditional arrangement such as foster care, single-parent family, parented by a family member who is not a parent, or adoption. It is also important to consider additional factors such as the connection between biological parents and their child when the biological parents are not living with or raising the child. As summarized by Sanson and Lewis, the impact of family living situations on students’ cognitive development and emotional and behavioral adjustment tends to be more problematic when students are from a non-traditional (non-nuclear) home, which would identify these children as being “at-risk” for academic, behavioral, and social concerns.

Issues Faced by Students from Non-Traditional Homes and At-Risk Youth

Students within a school building who live in non-traditional homes may present a variety of characteristics in different ways. Students who reside in non-traditional homes often are considered at-risk youth. Stanley (2012) reports that 30-45% of students in foster care and other non-traditional homes have disabilities and qualify for special education. Additionally,

students who live in non-traditional homes may experience higher levels of mobility (moving from place to place). Such mobility may make it difficult for educators to identify academic and behavioral issues which can result in fragmented or delayed access to services related to academic or behavioral concerns. There often can be confusion or lack of communication related to the educational rights of the guardian of the child, which halts or delays the process of identification and support for the student.

Students who live in non-traditional homes frequently are more likely to be part of a subgroup of students who may drop-out of school before graduation. Vargas and Brizard (2010) describe a study conducted in Rochester, New York that compared characteristics of students who had graduated with characteristics of students who had dropped out. All of the students in the study had lived or were living in non-traditional homes. Some major differences were evident in the students' upbringing. Among these differences was the important factor that students who graduated had at least one adult who had high expectations for the students, had modeled successful behavior, and was consistently present in their lives.

Consistent parental involvement is also a key factor in positive behavioral outcomes and avoiding truancy. Findings from a study related to parental involvement as social capital reported by McNeal,(1999) indicate that biological parental presence/guidance generally is a salient factor in explaining behavioral, but not cognitive outcomes. McNeal's research suggests that there is not a direct correlation between parental involvement and academic success. However, there appears to be a correlation between parental involvement and behavioral success, specifically with regard to truancy and dropping out, which in turn affects academic achievement. There is extensive conflicting information about the direct relationship between student achievement and parental engagement. These inconsistencies likely are linked to socioeconomic status rather than

overall parent involvement with their children. Within McNeal's study, it is explained that there are multiple dimensions of parent involvement that influence student behaviors. Among those dimensions, the first element is parent-child discussion, the second is parent involvement in a parent-teacher organization, the third is monitoring, and the fourth and final element is direct parental involvement in the educational process such as educational support practices. The study assessed each element and its effectiveness related to achievement in science, truancy, and dropping out. These elements were assessed for a variety of subgroups to compare results. Findings from the study suggested that the only dimension of parent involvement that was remotely consistent in terms of improving student achievement and reducing problematic behavior was parent-child discussion. Although this finding relates to academic achievement, it apparently does not apply to student behaviors such as dropping out and truancy. While this information overall appears to be positive, concerns are evident as well.

“However, the good news quickly dissipates once racial, household structure, and socioeconomic variation is examined. In many circumstances, what were presumed to be positive influences of social capital persisted only for members of traditionally advantaged sections of the population, namely white students, those of middle to upper socioeconomic status, and those from intact households” (McNeal, p. 131).

This study demonstrates that not all subgroups react the same way to parental involvement, and that parental involvement may not be the most significant factor in increasing student achievement, dropout rate, or truancy.

Overall, within the school setting, students who come from non-traditional homes demonstrate difficulties related to dropping out, truancy, and academic success. While parental

involvement may begin to help these students feel supported and has proven to have some influence on the reduction of truancy and dropout rates, it does not appear to have a significant influence on student achievement.

Assessing Needs of Students from Non-Traditional Homes

Assessing the needs of students in non-traditional homes is an important step that educators must take. Such assessment involves identifying the students, establishing a team approach, and utilizing appropriate tools to assess the students' needs.

Identification of Students

Students who reside in non-traditional homes present themselves in a variety of different ways within the school setting. Therefore, both formal and informal assessments are needed to identify their behavioral and academic needs. Students who have experienced some type of trauma or significant life event may struggle with a myriad of barriers to achieving success in school. Some of these barriers may be related to social-emotional factors, social skills, behavioral difficulties, or academic difficulties. Palmieri & La Salle (2017) suggest that students are placed into different settings because of adverse child-rearing situations. These situations may not be shared with schools, but it is the school's responsibility to assess the students' situation, and to develop a plan to help students break down or overcome the barriers that interfere with their academic success.

Palmieri & La Salle (2017), advise educators who work with students from non-traditional homes to remember that

“...despite the reason for placement in foster care, these students have been displaced from their families, which may result in a change in a sense of community, loss of pets, belongings, familiarity, and culture... Further, the effect of maltreatment or home removal from familiar individuals and contexts may result in behavioral problems, anxiety, attention problems, or other internalizing or externalizing behaviors in the school setting” (p. 118).

It is important for school teams, including school psychologists, to assess and recognize the warning signs and behaviors of students on an individual basis to plan and implement supports that are key to addressing the needs of each student individually. Not all students have the same experiences, nor do all students require the same supports.

Many of the roadblocks that students may encounter when living in non-traditional homes are related to increased mobility, early attachment disruptions, lack of consistency, and the ability for students to adjust and trust their new home or school setting (Palmieri & La Salle 2017). These roadblocks often present through deficits in social skills such as impairments in self-control, depression, anxiety, and/or posttraumatic stress disorder. Palmieri & La Salle explain that these students may seem detached and apathetic, overly sociable, disruptive, defiant, or antisocial. These issues with social skills can lead to behavioral difficulties such as difficulty with rule following, low frustration tolerance, difficulty controlling impulses, and discipline consequences. The social-emotional and behavioral difficulties that impact students who live in non-traditional homes puts these students at a greater risk for academic difficulties.

A Team Approach

While the school psychologist may take the lead on working with students who have social-emotional and behavioral needs, it is important that the student has access to a team of

individuals who are focused on the student's strengths. These students need to be motivated to learn, and that motivation cannot come from just one person. As reported by students in Palmieri's study, any supportive person or group who acted as a mentor and took the time to listen, made them feel valued, accepted the student, encouraged them in school and in life events, and provided motivation for the student to work hard at school, helped to increase positive educational experiences and in turn contributed to recovering from trauma and stressful home environments (Palmieri & La Salle 2017). The goal of mentoring should be to provide protective support and consistency. Students who are engaged in mentoring programs, or even are engaged with just with just one person whom they perceived as a mentor, have demonstrated improvements in behavior at school, social skills with peers, attendance, involvement in extracurricular activities, academic achievement, and other trauma symptoms. Although mentorship is positive and necessary, it requires individuals who can form a relationship and a bond with a student. Based on the child's situation, that person may not be the school psychologist. That is where the need for a team approach comes into play. Because children spend a significant amount of time in school, school staff members have the opportunity to provide extensive supports under the supervision of the school psychologist (Palmieri et al. 2017). While the teacher or other staff member is involved on the "front lines," with the mentoring, school psychologists are responsible for assessment, progress monitoring, planning, communication, and collaboration with staff and families.

Tools for Assessment

Given the necessity to assess the needs of each child who lives in a non-traditional home, it is imperative to identify assessments that effectively and accurately gather information. The goal of these assessments should be to identify and coordinate instructional, home, and home-

school supports for the student in question. One such tool could be the use of the Functional Assessment of Academic Behavior (FAAB).

...the FAAB is a potentially useful system to evaluate the ecological variables of a student's learning environment that may enhance or inhibit a student's academic progress. The authors provide a strong rationale for the impact of environmental variables on students' learning outcomes, which is supported by numerous research studies” (Ysseldyke & Christenson, 2002).

This assessment tool could prove to be useful because it evaluates the environmental variables that include home and school.

Students who are in non-traditional homes may be there for a variety of reasons. Many of those reasons could include some sort of trauma. An assessment such as the Trauma Symptoms Checklist for Children could be used. Based on the review by BUROS of this assessment, it is appropriate for children ages 8-16, and, “Briere has produced with the TSCC a very useful, if somewhat limited, measure for the psychometric assessment of traumatic symptoms in children and adolescents that can be administered, scored, and interpreted relatively easily” (Briere, 1996, p. 403). The assessment includes eight scales: underresponse, hyperresponse, anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress, dissociation, and sexual concerns. This assessment is a norms-based tool that was developed to identify areas of concern, and to detect areas where immediate interventions are necessary.

While there are a variety of assessments that could be used with students who live in non-traditional homes and who are presenting academic, behavioral, social, or social-emotional behavioral concerns, it is important that any assessment that is completed is age appropriate, that

it assesses students' current needs based on student input, and that it identifies areas of need or intervention.

Interventions to Support Students from Non-Traditional Homes

Following identification of the needs of students, the next essential step is to select appropriate interventions to support and assist the students, including interventions related to their basic needs, legal interventions, academic interventions, behavioral interventions, and creating interventions to aid in academic success

Basic Needs and Legal Interventions

Students who live in non-traditional homes may have concerns, or needs for intervention outside of academic, behavioral, or social-emotional needs. Often those types of needs may stem from the necessity, and perhaps urgency, of having their basic needs met. Schools are often required to assist students with their basic needs related to family support, school and home stability, or transportation.

Students in non-traditional homes such as students who are homeless, students in foster care, or students who are living with a family member who is not a biological parent are frequently characterized by “residential instability, separation, violence, emotional and behavioral problems, physical ailments, and constrained developmental and educational achievement” (Portwood, Shears, Nelson, & Thomas, 2015). A primary goal in developing interventions related to the basic needs of students, is to ensure housing stability and school stability. Portwood et al. (2015) also explain that the target intervention’s goal was to provide housing and supportive services to working poor families with children. Once the families who were to receive interventions were selected, a licensed social worker was assigned to the

program to provide case management services that included monitoring progress toward family goals focused on housing, employment and education. The primary focus of this study was improvement in the lives of the children who were part of the intervention, but participation of the adults provided helpful information related to the family context. As part of the study of Portwood and associates, rating scales were completed related to self-sufficiency, conflict within the family environment, perceptions of social support, parenting stress, and general strengths and difficulties. These types of inventories enabled parents to provide information about their feelings regarding their home situation. This information was useful in that it helped researchers to gain a full picture of the basic needs of the students such as family support, housing and home stability, parenting support, and transportation.

Related to issues of housing and home stability when students are homeless or displaced from their home is the need for school stability. The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) in addition to the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, (FCSIAA) provides protections and stability for students not only in homeless situations, but additionally for students who are in foster care (Clemens, McNaught, Martinez, & Klopfenstein, 2017). By affording students the opportunity to attain stability, students are able to maintain attachment and relationships with staff, current supports and services are able to continue, and fewer school disruptions lead to a higher probability of overall school success.

In addition to ESSA and FCSIAA, The McKinny-Vento Act of 2001 (MCKV) was enacted to ensure that homeless youth have equal access to free, appropriate, public education (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012). Within the MCKV, students are afforded the ability to attend the public school based on their last known residency, unless there are barriers related to compulsory attendance. The MCKV provides solutions for students related to issues such as transportation,

ease of registration, school supplies, and some health issues in order to help them overcome aforementioned barriers related to mobility, stability, and relationships, as well as to experience interventions within the school setting (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012). Hendricks and associates cite the lack of evaluation of the (MCKV) and describe the need for regular evaluations and revisions to the act to prove its successes and need for adjustments. In a review of the results of Hendricks et al study, there was no statistically significant difference in academic tests scores in a comparison of students who were homeless and received funding through the MCKV and of students who were homeless and not funded. However, the study did reveal that the students who received funding made significant gains in the area of improved attendance and reduction in overall dropout rates. The author also cites the need for training and funding for school personnel to provide resources related to students who are homeless, displaced, or emancipated, and children who are not living with their families.

Students who live in non-traditional homes often struggle in school. They struggle with academics, social skills, behavior, attendance, and social-emotional needs. Often these students struggle to access interventions related to these needs within the school setting, because their basic needs are not being met. If basic needs are first addressed, students will have the ability to access supports within the school setting to address their academic and behavioral needs.

Academic Interventions

Students who are in non-traditional homes generally struggle in many areas of schooling. One of the most obvious areas of struggle relates to academic achievement.

“More recently, this line of research [the nature of the relationship between home and school micro-systems in relationship to student’s academic success] has been extended to

examine the possibility that school environments may play an important role in counteracting or buffering youths' home-related risks, especially as they relate to school performance" (O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw, & Eklund, 2015, p. 143).

The study by O'Malley and associates assessed effectiveness of a few different academic intervention models. The first model assessed self-reported GPAs of students within different family structures. As a generalization, students who lived in a single parent home, were in foster care, were homeless, or who lived in some type of non-traditional home, earned GPAs that were significantly (0.22 to 0.38 of a point) lower than students who lived with two parents. The second model assessed student's perceptions of the school climate versus their GPAs in each family structure. Results suggest that the findings were positive and significant for each group. O'Malley and associates state:

"The magnitude of the school climate perceptions–GPA association was strongest for homeless students (0.42) ... The next strongest association was observed for students living in one-parent homes (0.34), followed by students living in two-parent homes (0.30) and students living in foster care (0.22). Overall, across all four family structures, higher self-reported GPA was associated with more positive school climate perceptions" (p. 149).

In total, the results of this study reveal a well-established relationship between family structure and academic success. Students who live in non-traditional settings tend to have lower self-reported GPAs. However, the study also suggests that school culture is a promotive favor for students' academic success. Positive perceptions of school culture and climate has beneficial effects for all students who were part of the study.

Behavioral Interventions

One of the most detrimental barriers to the academic success of students who live in non-traditional homes is their behavior, as well as their social, emotional, and mental health. Within the context of “behavior,” there are many facets that require assessment and intervention based on a student’s individual needs. The earlier the intervention is provided, the less negative impact the barriers described above have on the student. Head Start programs are designed to confront these issues early in a child’s life. Head Start programs were initiated in 1965 to promote wellness among low-income children and families. Goals of Head Start programs were to provide support to families based on improving learning skills, social skills, and overall health of children. Head Start programs are designed to improve six critical components of the development of children: education, mental health, family services, health, transportation, and special needs. However, there has been insufficient research on the validity of Head Start programs and the impact of these programs on the cognitive development in children. Lee (2016) completed a study related to the effects of Head Start programs and their efficacy in preparing at-risk children, including students in foster care, students who are homeless, and other students living in non-traditional homes, for school academically, socially, and behaviorally. Lee explains that children who are considered at-risk have a much higher chance of requiring special education, having unstable placements, experiencing a lack of attachment, having frequent relocations, and residing in less nurturing home environments. Based on the result of Lee’s study, Head Start makes a developmental impact on students who are specifically at-risk due to being in foster care or by being homeless. This impact includes behavioral, academic, and social contexts. Students who live in non-traditional homes generally live in a more chaotic system,

which is under resourced. Head Start has offered positive support and has documented that it is necessary to encourage development school readiness in children who are considered at-risk.

While early intervention and school readiness will increase students behavioral and academic success, school based mental health services are imperative for students who have not had the opportunity to overcome behavioral barriers, or who are experiencing these barriers to their success while attending school. While the emphasis on providing additional mental health providers has increased, so has the number of students requiring behavioral and mental health services. School systems and mental health providers need to collaborate to determine how the needs of these students can be met most effectively. “Researchers have examined the impact of academic interventions on mental health problems in children by studying contextual variables in schools that promote student engagement in learning or academic and social functioning” (Hoagwood, Olin, Kerker, Kratochwill, Crowe, & Saka, 2007, p. 67). These variables include practices within the school, relationships among students, staff, and families, in addition to school culture and climate. As a result of these studies, it is evident that there is a correlation between students’ academic functioning and their social-emotional health. Hoagwood and associates explain that while interventions in the area of social-emotional/behavioral concerns generally yield modest results, they are not sustained over time, unless the interventions continue. This need for continued support and social-emotional guidance for students who are considered at-risk due to their placement in a non-traditional home is definitive. Hoagwood and associates also emphasize social-emotional and behavioral interventions that are employed by appropriate personnel, preferably a licensed professional, also have a positive academic impact.

Long Term Implications for Students from Non-Traditional Homes

Long-term implications of the importance of providing support for students from non-traditional homes include the need to promote resilience among these students as well as considerations for their post-secondary adjustment.

Promoting Resilience in Children Who Live in Non-traditional Homes

Times of transitional are some of the most difficult for students. The period of time between primary and secondary school can be a time of increased anxiety for all children. Children who are supported by a strong system of encouragement and are backed by their families generally navigate this transition successfully. Many schools now help to facilitate this transition with special programs. Although such transition programs are helpful, the need for resilience is essential for students to adapt and overcome this very challenging time.

Like the transitional time from primary to secondary schooling, students who live in non-traditional homes may struggle with the concept of resilience. Resilience is “a phenomenon or process reflecting relatively positive adaptation despite experiences of adversity or trauma,” (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008, p. 219). Students who live in non-traditional homes require resilience more often. These children have been exposed to trauma and adversity much more frequently. These students do not have the family support that other students may have, and therefore are more at-risk. Students who are at-risk face challenges related to self-worth, self-esteem, depression, and self-competence.

Based on the 2008 study reported by Jindal-Snape & Miller (2008) there are implications for school systems to encourage and bolster resilience among students during times of transition. The identification of these students is an important starting point in this process. Students who

are at-risk for lowered resilience should be monitored, because these students are more vulnerable when they experience major transitions. Teachers and other staff members should identify warning signs related to low self-esteem and be willing and ready to react accordingly. Resilience and self-esteem theories both point to the importance of secure attachments at the time of transitions. Students who live in non-traditional homes may not have those positive and secure attachments at home, thus making it necessary for schools to provide those supports.

On a global level, students who live in non-traditional homes generally do not have the support, coaching, or positive attachment that they need to make transitions, both during their lives in school, and to adulthood. Without positive attachments students will not have resilience to make it through these tough transition times (Martin & Marsh, 2006).

Impacting Post-secondary Adjustment for Children in Non-traditional Homes

Like the transition from primary to secondary school, transitions to adulthood can be a treacherous and rocky road with the support and guidance of parents and families. Students who have spent their lives in non-traditional homes may have to face this transition on their own. Students who are preparing to transition to adult life require support, coaching, and models in order to make their transition successfully. Individuals who do not have the support, models, and guidance that is necessary when transitioning from childhood to adulthood face issues with secondary education, financial and housing struggles, low expectations for themselves, educational and social restrictions that limit personal opportunities, and lack of support from caring adults. Students who have disabilities and/or mental health challenges face even greater disabilities.

“Evidence suggests the My Life self-determination enhancement model offers a promising approach for supporting youths' self-determined and positive transition to adulthood. The model includes youth-directed, experientially oriented coaching in the application of self-determination skills to achieve youth-identified transition goals, coupled with peer mentoring workshops that provide opportunities for learning, networking and fun” (Powers, et al. 2018), p. 277).

This model focuses on providing one-on-one, weekly or bi-weekly youth-directed coaching to support youth in identifying and pursuing goals they value, and offering four complementary peer mentoring workshops where youth discuss transition topics, share their knowledge and accomplishments, and receive support from successful slightly older “near-peers” and adults who also have lived in similar situations. Based on the results of this study, the important elements necessary to facilitate the transition of students into the adult world are youth-direction, a coaching relationship, self-determination skills development, experience-based activities, and peer mentoring. Students who participated in the study shared that the most powerful and necessary aspects of the program were goal setting, the need for self-direction, taking action, and the peer coaching through each of those pieces.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to determine whether creating connections between students who live in non-traditional homes and a teacher who provided daily check-ins and helped students develop attainable goals for attendance and academic and behavioral success at school would be associated with improvements in students' school attendance, assignment completion, grades, and behavior in school. This research used a one group quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design. Within the homeroom of 24 students in which the study was conducted, nine students who were identified as living in non-traditional homes were invited to participate in the study. All nine of the students who were invited to participate in the study agreed to participate. Data reflecting these students' attendance, assignment completion, grades, and behavior from the fourth quarter of the prior school year were tallied as described below and at the end of the intervention period, these data were compared to those recorded during the intervention period to determine if they differed significantly.

Prior to the intervention, students were placed in a homeroom that contained 24 students, 15 of whom resided in traditional homes, and nine of whom resided in non-traditional homes with guardians other than their biological parents. Prior to the implementation of the intervention, all 24 students were asked to complete a voluntary survey (see Appendix A) which inquired about their feelings regarding attending school, their academic success, and their behavior at school.

Then, over a five-week period, the nine students who resided in non-traditional homes were provided with the daily check-in intervention with the homeroom teacher and a student-

selected preferred adult Each adult had agreed to participate in the intervention. After the intervention, all 24 students were asked to complete the same survey that they had taken prior to the intervention. Survey results were compared to learn whether the responses differed across groups before and after the intervention and if responses of the nine students living in non-traditional homes changed after they participated in the intervention.

Participants

The participants were students whom the researcher knew lived in non-traditional homes and who were placed in her homeroom. The sample consisted of nine students in a homeroom of 24 students who were in grades nine and 10 and who ranged in age from 13 to 16 years old. The homeroom was in a school with approximately 1500 students from socio-economically diverse backgrounds. At the time the study was conducted, approximately 48% of the students in the school received Free and Reduced Meals and 13% received special education support. This demographic data is comparable to the demographic information of the students within the treatment group.

Data Collection/Instruments

The following data were collected regarding the students participating in the intervention:

Attendance

The researcher calculated attendance rates for prior to and during the study by dividing the number of days in attendance for the fourth quarter by the number of school days in the fourth quarter and calculated the percentages of days attended in the five-week treatment period by dividing number of days in attendance during the intervention by the total days in the five week treatment period.

Grades

The academic performance of participants was reflected in two categories: the grades earned (mean percent correct on all assignments in both intervals: the fourth quarter of last year and the five- week intervention interval) and the percentage of assignments submitted.

Grades earned were calculated by averaging the percent correct for each of the student's fourth quarter assignments grades. Those fourth quarter grades then were compared to the average percent correct on all assignment's participants earned during the five-week treatment period.

Assignment Completion Rate

Assignment completion rates were calculated by dividing the number of completed assignments by the total number of assignments given in each period and compared.

Behavior

Behavior was quantified by first tallying the fourth quarter office referrals from the fourth quarter of the prior school year and the office referrals made for each participant during the five-week intervention period. Then weekly referral rates for each interval were computed and compared.

Lastly, a survey was administered to both the nine participating students and other 15 students in their homeroom to assess their feelings regarding attending school, their academic success, and their behavior at school. The treatment and comparison groups' pre and post intervention responses then were compared.

Procedure

Procedures for this action research study first involved selecting the sample of nine students who were identified as living in non-traditional homes and assigning them to a homeroom with the researcher as the teacher of record with administrative support and approval.

On the first day of the study, all students in the homeroom were asked to voluntarily complete a survey (see Appendix A) which contained questions regarding their feelings about attending school, their academic success, and their behavior. Additionally, the researcher reviewed the attendance history and recorded baseline data reflecting attendance and grades in the fourth quarter of the prior school year for those students identified as living in non-traditional homes (the treatment group).

The researcher then presented information about the effects of attendance on school success to the students who lived in non-traditional homes in a small group of two to three students at a time. The students in non-traditional homes then were provided with the intervention which was comprised of goal setting regarding attendance, behavior, and grades, tracking progress, daily homeroom check-ins, and daily check-ins with each student's preferred staff member.

Students were asked to identify two preferred staff members on the first day of school, and the researcher determined which would be the best fit based on student preference, teacher willingness to participate, and logistics, such as scheduling and duty times and discussed the process with each of the requested teachers/adults. Each of the selected teachers was willing to participate and to support their students so all students were able to be assigned to their most preferred adult.

Students then were given a goal-setting form (Appendix C) which was intended to facilitate their ability to track their progress and refine their goals with adult support, which was provided daily by the assigned preferred staff, throughout the intervention. Each student was required to create a goal for grades, behavior, and attendance, unless the student met the criteria of 85% or better in a particular area. In that case, they were not required to set a goal in that area. Students were required to chart their progress weekly at a meeting with their preferred adult. If they missed their scheduled meeting, then another meeting was scheduled for the following school day and a note was written on the side of their chart.

The intervention began during the first week of school and continued for five weeks. Following the intervention, all 24 students in the homeroom were re-administered the same survey they completed at the beginning of the study to assess whether the groups' feelings about school attendance, grades, and behavior differed before or after or changed over the course of the intervention. This was accomplished by comparing the responses on the pre and post surveys. Additionally, data regarding attendance rates, behavior incidents, and grades and work completion for each student in the treatment group were compared to their baseline data related to these factors to learn if any changes had occurred over the course of the intervention. Finally, either the homeroom teacher (the researcher) or the preferred adult met with the students individually to discuss and review goal achievement with each of the nine participating students.

CHAPTER IV

The researcher implemented a daily check-in/mentoring system to determine if such a system would increase student participants' school attendance, grades and work completion, and behavior in school. The main hypotheses to be tested are presented below along with follow results of t-tests for dependent samples comparing these values before and during the intervention for the treatment group. Survey results also were summarized and are compared below.

ho1: attendance rate before intervention= attendance rate during intervention

ho2: academic success (assignment completion rates and average grades) before intervention= academic success during intervention

ho3: behavior ratings (office referral rate) before intervention= behavior ratings (office referral rate) during intervention

Descriptive statistics for the four 4 variables for which the means were compared before and during the intervention are presented in Table 1. These data revealed that all changes were in the anticipated directions. On average, attendance and academic success improved and behavior issues, as reflected in office referrals, decreased.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Attendance, Grades and Behavior Before and After the Check-in Intervention (Treatment group only, n=9)

Dependent Variable	Interval	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Attendance	Pre	52.617	29.189	13.300	86.700
	Post	79.111	21.622	24.200	93.900
Grades	Pre	.634	.0825	.493	.721
	Post	.659	.138	.348	.835
Assignment completion	Pre	.547	.133	.341	.790
	Post	.741	.179	.405	.944
Behavior (weekly referrals)	Pre	4.556	3.779	.000	11.000
	Post	.333	.707	.000	2.000

The differences in attendance, grades, assignment completion, and weekly referral rates/behavior scores of the treatment group before and after the intervention were compared using T-tests for dependent samples. Those results follow in Table 2 and indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the pre and post percent attendance rates (mean pre-post difference = -26.494, $p < .018$) and the pre and post weekly referral rates (mean pre-post difference = 4.222, $p < .006$) (as indicated by the probability values of these differences, which were less than the criterion of .05). Therefore, null hypotheses 1 and 3 were rejected. Although mean grades and assignment completion rates both increased for the treatment group over the course of the intervention, null hypothesis 2 was retained, as the T statistics indicated the probability of finding differences this large ($p < .666$ for grades and $p < .052$ for assignment completion) were not low enough ($< .05$) to be considered statistically significant for a dependent sample this size.

Table 2

Results of t-tests for Dependent Samples Comparing Mean Attendance, Grades, and Behavior for Students in the Treatment (NT family) Group Before and During the Intervention

	df	T	Sig. (p) (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	s.d.	SEM	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Attendance	8	-2.978	.018	-26.494	26.688	8.896	-47.008	-5.980
Grades	8	-.448	.666	-.025	.166	.055	-.153	.103
Assignment Completion	8	-2.286	.052	-.194	.254	.085	-.389	.002
Behavior (Weekly Referrals)	8	3.744	.006	4.222	3.383	1.128	1.622	6.823

Survey Results:

A pre and post intervention survey (see Appendices A and B) were also administered to assess the feelings regarding attendance, behavior, and grades of the treatment group of nine students who lived in non-traditional homes and the 15 peers in their homeroom who lived in traditional homes. Responses to the survey items were compared to determine whether they differed before or after the children with non-traditional families/homes were provided the check-in/mentoring intervention. The treatment group’s success regarding meeting the goals they had set was also assessed and results were tallied for each student in the treatment condition. Those results follow:

Student Reflections on Attendance, Behavior and Grades

All 24 students were given both a pre and post survey that asked them to respond to items about the following topics: reasons for missing school, behavioral concerns, and whether their grades reflect their ability. Each group's response on both the pre and post survey were placed into categories with like meanings so they could be tallied, summarized, and compared.

When asked about typical reasons for missing school, students' responses fell into the following four categories: they had no absences, they were sick, family reasons, or mental health reasons. The researcher designed this question to determine a pattern of behavior for students' absences and to identify outside forces that were impacting student attendance. When comparing the pre to the post data, the number of students in both the treatment group and the comparison group who responded that they had no absences increased. The number of "sick" responses from both the treatment group and the comparison group increased as the number of responses for "family reasons" remained the same for the treatment group and decreased dramatically for the comparison group. Lastly, the responses for "mental health" remained consistent in both groups.

When asked about behavioral concerns that they displayed in school, students reported the following four categories of problems: work completion, following school rules, attendance, and acting out. When comparing the pre survey data to the post survey data, the data continued to be relatively consistent with slight shifts from acting out concerns to concerns related to work completion and following school rules for both groups. Some changes include a decrease in "acting out" behaviors for both groups, and a slight decrease in "attendance" for the comparison group.

When asked “Do your grades reflect your ability?”, students’ responses fit into the following three categories: yes, no, or sometimes. When comparing the pre survey to the post survey data, more students in non-traditional homes changed their responses to yes or sometimes after initially responding “no” than did those in the comparison group (eight students total changed, four students from each group). More students in the treatment group than the comparison group responded “yes” to this survey question.

Table 3

Post Intervention Reports and Changes in Whether Respondents Felt that their Grades Reflect Ability Disaggregated by Group

Post Intervention Responses to “Do your grades reflect your ability?”					
Group	N	Yes	No	Sometimes	Changed from “no” or “sometimes” to “yes”
NT homes	9	4	3	2	4
Comparison group	15	12	1	2	4

Student Rating Scales

Summary and Comparison of Ratings of Motivators for Attendance, Grades and Appropriate Behavior

Responses to a series of rating scale items on the survey (items in the chart, 1-12) were collected before and after the intervention to assess participants' perceptions of how much the following four things motivated them in terms of attendance, behavior and grades: Pleasing Family, Pleasing Self, Not Getting into Trouble and Pleasing Teachers. Descriptive statistics of these ratings and gains in them over the intervention are summarized in Table 3 below.

The goal of these items was to identify students' motivation for attending school, completing schoolwork, earning good grades, and following rules, and to determine if any of those factors changed after the intervention. As a whole, the ratings suggested each factor was important. Most means were over 5, even at the start of the intervention, and all but one gain score (for the comparison group, gains in ratings of following rules to stay out of trouble) were positive.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics of ratings and gains (post-pre ratings) of four factors impacting attendance, grades, and behavior, disaggregated by groups.

<i>Ratings of motivators (1= not at all true to 10= very true)</i>	<i>Interval</i>	<i>Statistics</i>	<i>Family happy</i>	<i>Own Benefit</i>	<i>Do not get in trouble</i>	<i>Teacher happy</i>
<i>Non-Traditional Family (Treatment) Group n=9</i>						
	<i>Pre</i>	<i>Mean</i>	5.000	6.444	8.333	5.778

ATTENDANCE		<i>range</i>	2-8	5-8	4-10	1-9
	<i>Post</i>	<i>Mean</i>	5.889	6.889	8.4444	6.444
		<i>range</i>	4-8	5-8	5-10	4-9
	GAINS		.889	.445	.111	.666
GRADES	<i>Pre</i>	<i>Mean</i>	5.444	7.333	3.667	5.333
		<i>range</i>	3-7	5-10	1-7	2-8
	<i>Post</i>	<i>Mean</i>	5.778	7.556	4.778	5.667
		<i>range</i>	5-7	5-10	3-7	2-8
	GAINS		.334	.223	1.111	.334
RULES	<i>Pre</i>	<i>Mean</i>	5.333	6.222	6.556	6.778
		<i>range</i>	3-8	5-8	3-10	3-9
	<i>Post</i>	<i>Mean</i>	5.667	6.778	6.889	7.000
		<i>range</i>	4-8	5-8	5-10	4-9
	GAINS		.334	.556	.333	.222
<i>Ratings of motivators</i> <i>(1= not at all true to</i> <i>10= very true)</i>	<i>Interval</i>	<i>Statistics</i>	<i>Family happy</i>	<i>Own Benefit</i>	<i>Do not get</i> <i>in trouble</i>	<i>Teacher</i> <i>happy</i>

<i>Traditional Family (Comparison) Group n=15</i>						
<i>ATTENDANCE</i>	<i>Pre</i>	<i>Mean</i>	8.133	7.867	7.333	6.267
		<i>Range</i>	4-10	4-10	1-10	1-9
	<i>Post</i>	<i>Mean</i>	8.467	7.867	7.867	6.400
		<i>range</i>	6-10	4-10	5-10	4-9
	<i>GAINS</i>		.334	0	.534	.133
<i>GRADES</i>	<i>Pre</i>	<i>Mean</i>	7.267	7.800	6.400	6.800
		<i>Range</i>	4-10	6-10	1-10	1-9
	<i>Post</i>	<i>Mean</i>	7.267	7.867	6.600	7.533
		<i>Range</i>	5-10	6-10	2-10	4-9
	<i>GAINS</i>		0	.067	.2	.733
<i>RULES</i>	<i>Pre</i>	<i>Mean</i>	7.400	7.333	8.133	7.133
		<i>Range</i>	3-10	6-9	5-10	4-9
	<i>Post</i>	<i>Mean</i>	7.533	7.400	8.067	7.667
		<i>Range</i>	3-10	6-9	5-10	6-9
	<i>GAINS</i>		.133	.067	-.066	.534

Finally, the gain scores for mean ratings of each influence (pleasing family, self, staying out of trouble and pleasing teachers) for both groups were plotted on three bar graphs to allow visual comparison of the changes in the groups' ratings of the importance of family, self, avoiding trouble and teachers in relation to their attendance, grades and following rules over the course of the intervention.

Figure 1 shows the changes in ratings of the importance of each motivating factor for attendance of students living in traditional homes compared to those in of students living in non-traditional homes. The gains in how much each factor was rated to impact attendance of students in the treatment group exceeded those of the students in the comparison group for each factor except staying out of trouble, suggesting the treatment group changed more (and positively) in their motivation to please family, self, and teachers than the comparison group over the course of the intervention.

Figure 1

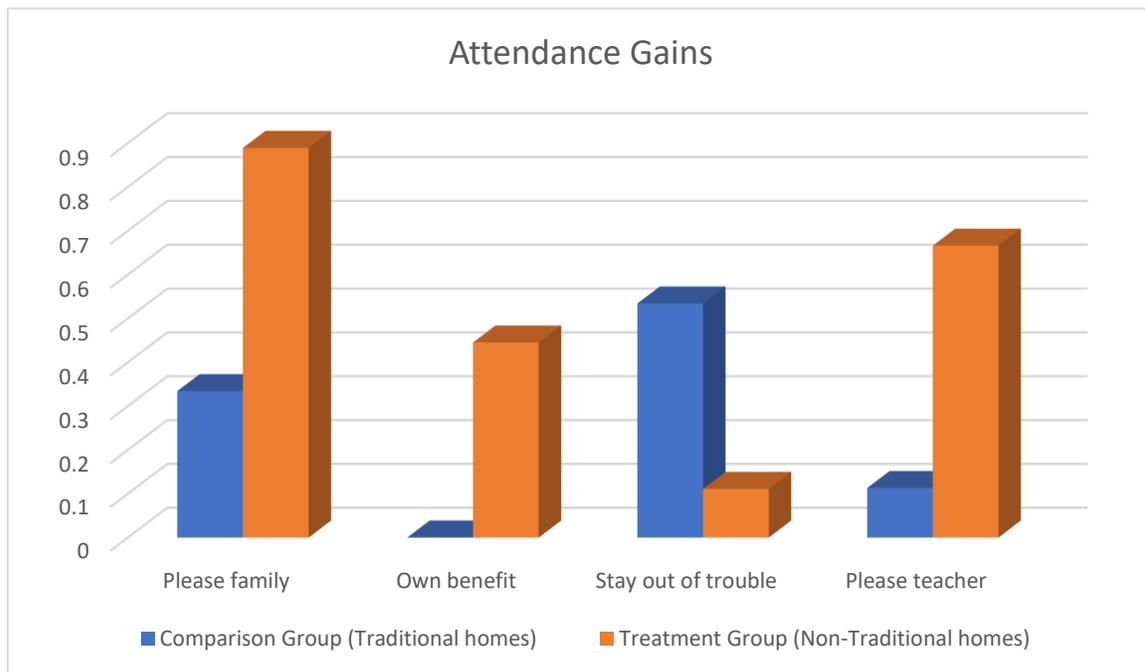


Figure 2 shows the mean gains in the ratings of each motivating factor in relation to grades of students in traditional homes compared to those in non-traditional homes. The treatment group’s mean increase in ratings of the impact on their grades of pleasing their family, their own benefit, and staying out of trouble exceeded those of the comparison group, but the comparison group’s mean gain in ratings of the impact of pleasing teachers on grades was higher than that of the treatment group.

Figure 2

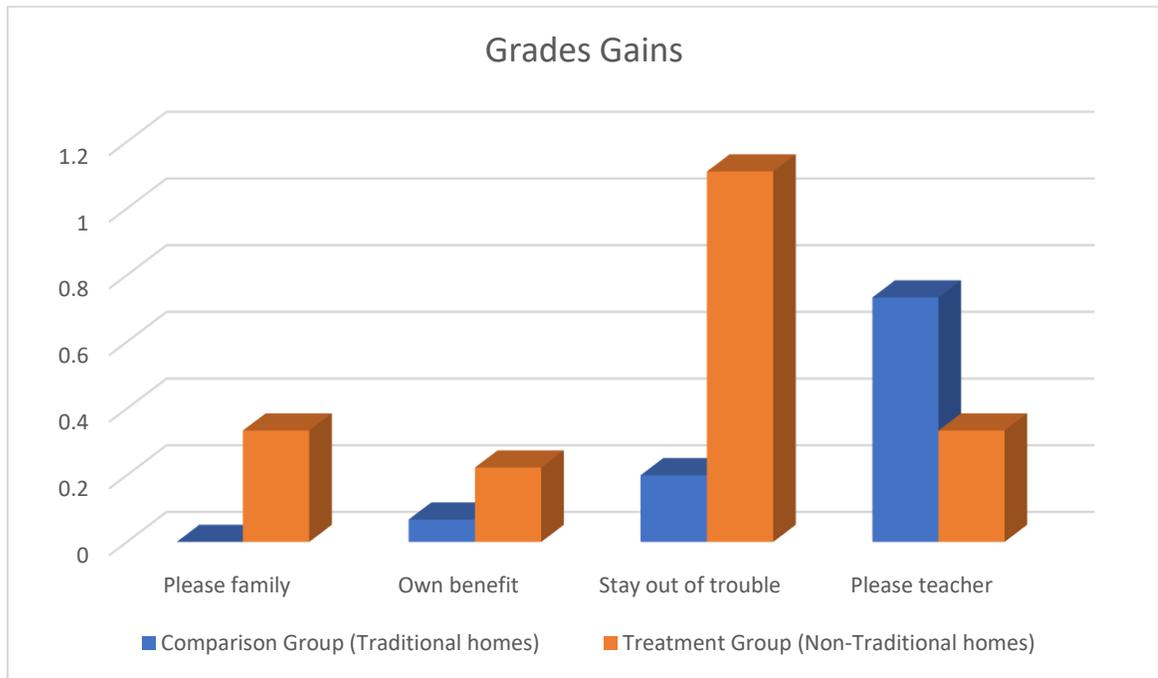
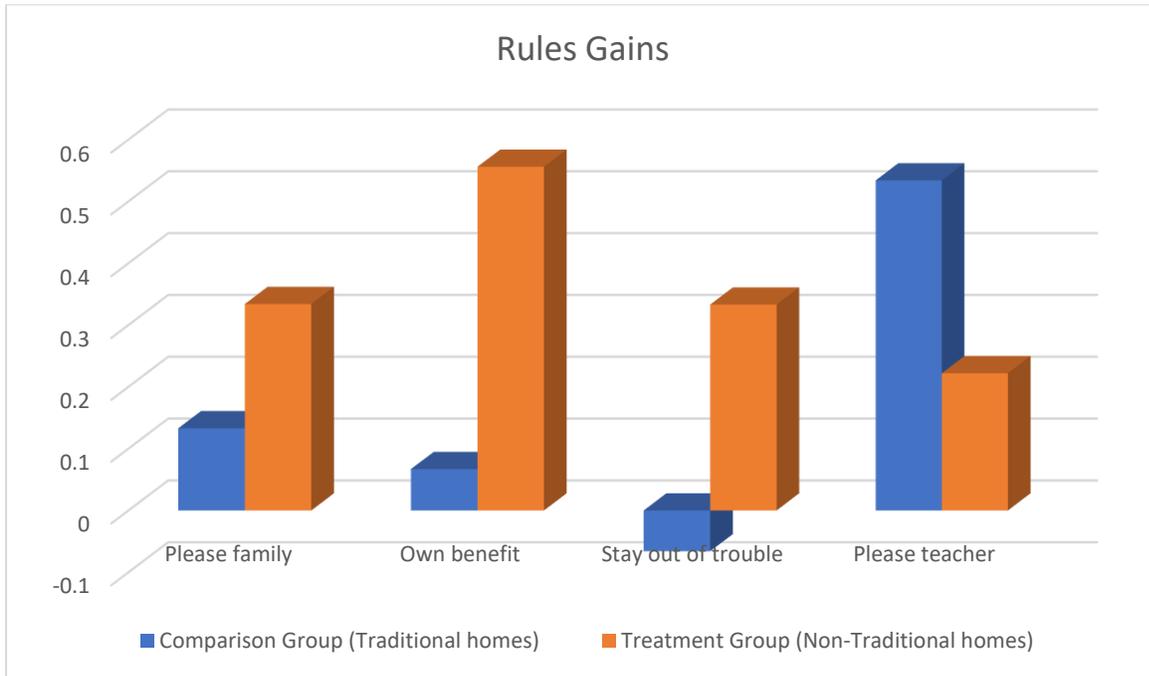


Figure 3 shows the mean gains in ratings of the impact of each motivating factor for each group in relation to following rules. The treatment group’s mean gains in ratings of pleasing their family, their own benefit, and staying out of trouble as reasons to follow rules exceeded those of the comparison group, but again, the comparison group’s responses yielded a higher mean gain in ratings of how often pleasing teachers was a reason to follow rules than did the comparison group’s responses.

Figure 3



Post interventions Goal data

Finally, descriptive statistics also were computed for item four on the post treatment group survey (Appendix B). Item four asked respondents to rate how well they did on their goals using a scale from 1= “I did not do well on my goal” to 10= “I achieved my goal entirely”. Descriptive statistics for the treatment group’s responses follow in Table 7.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Ratings of Goal Achievement (Treatment Group only)

Goal	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation
Behavior	9	8.778	7.00	10.00	1.093
Attendance	9	8.111	.00	10.00	3.140
Grades	9	6.111	.00	9.00	2.571

Students' mean self-ratings revealed that there was a larger feeling of success in the areas of behavior and attendance than in grades. As noted previously (in Table 1 and Table 2), the treatment group students' behavior issues (office referrals) decreased significantly throughout the treatment, and their responses to item four on the post survey reflected that the students themselves seemed to feel success in this area (mean rating was 8.778) as well as attendance (mean rating was 8.111). Their ratings of whether they met their academic goals were also positive (mean rating= 6.111), although not quite as high.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The main hypothesis of the research was that there would be change in students' academic and behavioral success (measured by attendance, grades, work completion, and referral rates) after participating in a check-in/mentoring intervention. Two of the main null hypotheses were rejected as a significant change was found between the students' attendance rates and behavior (weekly office referral rate) before and after the intervention. The null hypothesis related to attendance percentages was rejected because there was a significant mean increase from 52.617% to 79.11%. Additionally, the null hypothesis related to behavioral success was rejected because there was significant mean decrease from 4.556 office referrals per week to .333 office referrals per week. Indicators of academic success (work completion and grades) were not significantly different before and after the intervention but did change in the expected direction, indicating improvement, as the mean work completion rate increase was 19.48% and mean grade increase (percent correct) was 2.49%. (See Table 1).

IMPLICATIONS OF RESULTS

The baseline information collected about students who live in non-traditional home related to grades, attendance information, work completion habits, and referral rates was consistent with previous research by McNeal(1999) and Palmieri & La Salle 2017 who described students residing in non-traditional homes as struggling with barriers to their academic and behavioral success.

Students who participated in the intervention were enthusiastic to chart their progress, self-reported that they enjoyed working with selected staff members and demonstrated the ability to

persevere through their assignments when the schoolwork became difficult. Additionally, students in the treatment group shared that they were motivated to make the decision to come to school on days when they had a strong desire to stay home. As the data indicated, grades, work completion, and attendance increased, while behavior incidents resulting in office referrals decreased for the treatment group during the intervention. Additionally, this researcher observed that students' motivation for learning and for self-monitoring seemed to increase as well. Students demonstrated enthusiasm to review and chart their progress and sought out their mentors to share positive experiences and progress.

These findings suggest check-in/monitoring programs may be helpful for students in non-traditional homes by improving motivation to attend school, complete work, and behave in accordance with school norms.

THEORETICAL CONSEQUENCES

The research related to students who live in non-traditional homes is consistent with the previously completed research. Mentoring, goal setting and tracking, and consistency significantly change attendance and behavioral success. This information supports the research findings reported by Palmieri & La Salle 2017 which suggest that students who live in non-traditional homes struggle academically and behaviorally. This study supports the theory that students who reside in non-traditional homes require additional support in school through mentors and interventions in order to increase their academic achievement and meet behavioral and attendance goals.

THREATS TO VALIDITY

While designing and implementing this research there were several threats to the validity of its findings. The first was the fact that only nine students participated in the intervention. It is difficult to hypothesize how the results would translate to a larger or demographically different population. A second threat to validity involved the time period over which the research was conducted. First, baseline data were collected based on fourth quarter data, and then compared to the first five weeks of the first quarter. Using these time frames necessarily involved different teachers and different schools for some students as well as unquantified maturational changes over the summer. Secondly, the amount of time in which the intervention was implemented was brief, just five weeks. If the research had been extended over a larger period of time, such as a semester or an entire school year, the results may have differed. It is notable that for the purposes of the study, the data collection was capped after the five-week intervention period, but the intervention will continue throughout the remainder of the school year with the selected students.

The last significant threat to validity was the lack of control over variation in student and teacher personalities and their interactions. While all teachers implemented the intervention with fidelity, the intervention reflected some differences based on individual choices-styles.

CONNECTIONS TO PREVIOUS STUDIES/ EXSISTING LITERATURE

Both McNeal (1999) and Palmieri & La Salle (2017), describe a lack of academic and behavioral progress for many students who live in non-traditional homes and suggested that some of such students are considered at-risk. The students who participated in the intervention were compared to other ninth and tenth grade students who reside in traditional homes. While the

students in non-traditional homes were compared to students in traditional homes, that does not preclude the possibility that some of the students in the traditional homes could have had challenges of their own. The students who resided in non-traditional homes demonstrated baseline data that was consistent with the theories of McNeal and Palmieri & La Salle. Specifically, Palmieri & La Salle identified the need for students who live in non-traditional homes to make connections with a mentor to gain support and consistency in order to increase school success. This intervention paired students with a teacher to conduct check-ins and monitoring, by which the students were able to gain a support system and from which they seemed to benefit in terms of the criteria assessed and their willingness to participate and share with the researcher.

As O'Malley, et al. (2015) explained, relationships within the school setting can impact a student's ability to increase their overall academic growth. As revealed in this intervention, students were able to increase their grades and work completion when paired with a mentor within the school setting. Although it cannot be stated for certain the intervention caused these positive changes, results were promising and the reasons for these changes merit further investigation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Further research should be conducted to determine how check-in and monitoring interventions impact student achievement for any students considered to be at risk. Such studies might provide schools justification for using more resources and conducting research to support the implementation of mentoring programs that are focused on improving students' academic and behavioral achievement.

In a future study, the researcher also might include parental involvement and support in the intervention. In addition to the current intervention strategies, some additional supports that could be beneficial include supports for parents and/or guardians of students who live in non-traditional homes, such as instructing families on the graduation requirements for students, offering sessions on reinforcement or study skills, and open forums for parents and/or guardians to be able to ask questions about their child's education.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the intervention with the selected nine students who reside in non-traditional homes demonstrated positive change in the areas of grades and work completion and statistically significant positive change in the areas of attendance and behavioral success. Research cited above suggests that students who reside in non-traditional homes struggle in comparison to students who live in traditional homes when it comes to academic success, behavioral success, and attendance. The five-week intervention that consisted of students tracking their progress, experiencing check ins with a mentor of their choosing, and participating in a consistent homeroom with the researcher, facilitated positive progress for all participants. The students completed a survey before and after the intervention and were observed throughout the process. Based on these surveys and the researcher's observations, students' motivation to complete schoolwork, to attend school regularly, and to decrease their negative behavior increased over the course of the intervention. Given these positive outcomes, future research appears warranted and the sample from this study will be given the opportunity to continue to receive the supports provided during this study.

References

- Briere, J. (1996). In Boyle G. J., Viswesvaran C.(Eds.), *Trauma symptom checklist for children* Retrieved from <https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/goucher.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mmt&AN=test.2449&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Cavanaugh, S. E., & Huston, A. C. (2006). Family Instability and Children's Early Problem Behavior. *Social Forces*, 85, 551-580.
- Clemens, E., McNaught, K., Martinez, J., & Klopfenstein, K. (2017). Advocating for educational stability for youth in foster care. *Child Law Practice*, 36(3), 57-59. Retrieved from <https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/goucher.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=122925457&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Hendricks, G., & Barkley, W. (2012). Necessary, but not sufficient: The McKinney-vento act and academic achievement in North Carolina. *Children & Schools*, 34(3), 179-185. doi:10.1093/cs/cds007
- Hoagwood, K. E., Olin, S. S., Kerker, B. D., Kratochwill, T. R., Crowe, M., & Saka, N. (2007). Empirically based school interventions targeted at academic and mental health functioning. *Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders*, 15(2), 66-92. Retrieved from <https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/goucher.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=25241838&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

- Jindal-Snape, D., & Miller, D. (2008). A challenge of living? understanding the psycho-social processes of the child during primary-secondary transition through resilience and self-esteem theories. *Educational Psychology Review*, 20(3), 217-236. doi:10.1007/s10648-008-9074-7
- Lee, K. (2016). Head start's impact on cognitive outcomes for children in foster care. *Child Abuse Review*, 25(2), 128-141. doi:10.1002/car.2413
- Leonard, S., & Gudino, O. (2016). Academic and mental health outcomes of youth placed in out-of-home care: The role of school stability and engagement. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 45(6), 807-827. doi:10.1007/s10566-016-9357-y.
- Martin, A. J., & Marsh, H. W. (2006). Academic resilience and its psychological and educational correlates: A construct validity approach. *Psychology in the School*, 267-281.
- McNeal Jr., R. B. (1999). Parental involvement as social capital: Differential effectiveness on science achievement, truancy, and dropping out. *Social Forces*, 78(1), 117-145. Retrieved from <https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/goucher.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=2374569&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- O'Malley, M., Voight, A., Renshaw, T. L., & Eklund, K. (2015). School climate, family structure, and academic achievement: A study of moderation effects. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 30(1), 142-157. doi:10.1037/spq0000076
- Palmieri, L. E., & La Salle, T. P. (2017). Supporting students in foster care. *Psychology in the Schools*, 54(2), 117-126. doi:10.1002/pits.21990

Portwood, S. G., Shears, J. K., Nelson, E. B., & Thomas, M. L. (2015). Examining the impact of family services on homeless children. *Child & Family Social Work, 20*(4), 480-493.

doi:10.1111/cfs.12097

Powers, L. E., Fullerton, A., Schmidt, J., Geenen, S., Oberweiser-Kennedy, M., Dohn, J., . . .

Blakeslee, J. (2018). Perspectives of youth in foster care on essential ingredients for promoting self-determination and successful transition to adult life: My life model. *Children & Youth Services Review, 86*, 277-286. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.02.007

Sanson, A., & Lewis, V. (2001). Children and their family contexts. *Family Matters, (59)*, 4.

Retrieved

from <https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/goucher.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=5382949&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Stanley, S. G. (2012). Children with disabilities in foster care: The role of the school social worker in the context of special education. *Children & Schools, 34*(3), 190-192.

doi:10.1093/cs/cds012

Vargas, B., & Brizard, J. (2010). Beating the odds in urban schools. *Education Week, 30*(10), 22-24. Retrieved

from <https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/goucher.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=55215327&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Ysseldyke, J., & Christenson, S. (2002). In Sandoval J., Ward S. B.(Eds.), *Functional assessment of academic behavior*. Retrieved

from <https://goucher.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/goucher.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mmt&AN=test.2672&site=ehost-live&scope=sit>

Appendix A- Pre-Survey for All (24) and Post Survey for Comparison Group (15) Survey

(Given to all)

Initials: _____ Date: _____

1. My attendance
Describe a typical reason you miss school (if you ever do).
2. My school behavior
Describe any behavior issues or concerns.
3. My grades
Do your grades reflect affect your ability? Why or why not?

Please respond to the following questions as honestly as possible. Use the following rating scale:

1= not at all true

5= neither true nor false

10= very true

Question:	Rating:
1. I come to school because it makes my family happy.	
2. I come to school for my own benefit.	
3. I come to school so that I do not get in trouble.	
4. I come to school because it makes my teachers happy.	
5. I try to earn good grades because it makes my family happy.	
6. I try to earn good grades for my own benefit.	
7. I try to earn good grades so that I do not get in trouble.	
8. I try to earn good grades because it makes my teachers happy.	
9. I follow the rules because it makes my family happy.	
10. I follow the rules for my own benefit.	
11. I follow the rules so that I do not get in trouble.	
12. I follow the rules because it makes my teachers happy.	

1. Who or what motivates your to do your best in school?

2. What happens at home when you do not do your best in school?

3. What happens at school when you do not do your best in school?

Appendix B- Post-Survey (for Treatment Group 9)

Initials: _____ Date: _____

1. My attendance
Describe a typical reason you miss school (if you ever do).
2. My school behavior
Describe any behavior issues or concerns.
3. My grades
Do your grades reflect affect your ability? Why or why not?

Please respond to the following questions as honestly as possible. Use the following rating scale:

1= not at all true

5= neither true nor false

10= very true

Question:	Rating:
1. I come to school because it makes my family happy.	
2. I come to school for my own benefit.	
3. I come to school so that I do not get in trouble.	
4. I come to school because it makes my teachers happy.	
5. I try to earn good grades because it makes my family happy.	
6. I try to earn good grades for my own benefit.	
7. I try to earn good grades so that I do not get in trouble.	
8. I try to earn good grades because it makes my teachers happy.	
9. I follow the rules because it makes my family happy.	
10. I follow the rules for my own benefit.	
11. I follow the rules so that I do not get in trouble.	
12. I follow the rules because it makes my teachers happy.	

1. Who or what motivates your to do your best in school?

2. What happens at home when you do not do your best in school?

3. What happens at school when you do not do your best in school?

4. Please fill in the chat with your goals, and rate you're your attainment of each goal and indicate what helped or hindered your progress towards meeting each goal, Thank you!

1- I did not do well on my goal

10- I achieved my goal entirely

	Behavior	Attendance	Grades
Goal:			
Rating (1-10)			
What helped you in trying to reach this goal or made it easier for you to do so?			
What hindered your progress in meeting this goal or made it harder for you to do so?			
Going forward, what help would you like to continue working on this goal?			

Appendix C- Goal Setting Sheet for Treatment group

The teacher will complete the baseline data with the student during the first meeting with the student and help to set attainable goals based on the baseline.

The teacher will also help students develop and use a chart that will help them track their progress.

Each student was required to create a goal for grades, behavior, and attendance, unless the student meets the criteria of 85% or better in one area.

Name:	Grades (G)	Behavior (B)	Attendance (A)
Baseline			
After Intervention			

Directions:

FIRST

Think about your grades, behavior, and attendance for last school year. Were your grades as high as they could be? Did you make decisions that got you in trouble? How was your attendance?

Did you miss a lot of school or come in late?

THEN:

Think about where you were at the end of last year and create two goals that take you in a positive direction this year. Make sure your goal is measurable and attainable!

	What will help you reach your goals?	G, B, A?
Goal 1:		Grades
Goal 2:		Behavior
Goal 3:		Attendance

Create a chart to track your progress on each goal for the next 6 weeks. You will be updating your chart 1 time weekly. By the end of the 6 weeks, your chart will contain 6 data points for each goal. Be sure to add start and finish!

Goal 1:

Goal 2:

Goal 3:

Appendix D- Sample Goal Charts

