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The Effect of Classroom Structure and Practice on Transition to Middle School

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THE EFFECT OF CLASSROOM STRUCTURE

AND PRACTICE ON TRANSITION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

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(Under the Direction of Teri Denlea Melton)

ABSTRACT

The passage from elementary school to middle school, along with physical, social, and emotional changes associated with adolescence, often results in personal and social, organizational, and academic declines. The classroom structure of elementary school varies between a team teaching setting and a self-contained setting, and each instructional environment has the potential to impact all areas of development for each student. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between fifth grade classroom setting (team teaching vs. self-contained) and sixth grade student behavior. The gender and the socio-economic status of transitioning students also served as variables of the study. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine middle school students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school based on elementary classroom structure. Results from this study indicated that males, socio-economically disadvantaged students, and students from a self-contained elementary classroom experienced significantly higher levels of discipline referrals during the transition to middle school. Using the Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002), there were no statistically significant differences found between the self-contained and team teaching classroom structures on the social and personal, organizational, and academic constructs of middle school transition. The findings from this study suggest

that elementary classroom structure may impact each student's transition experience into middle school. Suggestions regarding the implementation of effective transition strategies are provided along with recommendations concerning future research on the relationship between elementary classroom structure and middle school transition.

INDEX WORDS: Elementary classroom structure, Middle school transition, Team teaching classroom structure, Discipline referrals, Student perceptions.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my loving and supportive wife, Ashley and my beautiful daughters, Annabell and Ella Schexnaildre. This accomplishment would not have been possible without their love, support, encouragement, and inspiration.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The middle school experience is a crucial period in an adolescent's life when many students start assuming the role of young adults. Middle school is a time when lifelong friendships are formed and talents are both discovered and developed. It is a three-year period which proves to be an experience that serves as a spring board for the academic and personal future for students as they move onto high school.

For many fifth grade students, the comfort of being in the highest grade level and serving as leaders in a school with familiar faces often proves to be a wonderful experience of growth and happiness during their last year in elementary school. Each school year, adolescents leave the smaller, nurturing elementary surroundings and enter a middle school larger in size and student population, and with a much more competitive environment. The myriad of issues created by the concurrent personal and social, organizational, and academic developments of these adolescents are amplified by foreign surroundings.

Akos (2006) explained that the personal transformations during puberty and ecological differences between elementary and middle schools are intense. Along with adjusting to a new social environment, students transitioning from an elementary to a middle school must adjust to different academic expectations, a reorganized school day, and multiple teachers (Schielack & Seeley, 2010). When adolescents move into middle school, anxiety levels generally increase due to normative changes such as puberty, social and emotional development, the growing importance of peer relationships, and the development of higher level thinking skills (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006). As students

transition into middle school, a loss of student motivation to achieve can often be seen (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006; Parker, 2009). Needless to say, the transition into middle school brings multiple complex issues along with positive opportunities for students.

In order to better understand the middle school transition experience of students, information about the development of the middle school concept is appropriate. Concerned about the lack of appropriate fit between the needs of adolescence and learning environment provided by schools, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (Carnegie) released a groundbreaking position paper focusing on middle reform, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989). Carnegie's *Turning Points* focused on improving education for middle schools by providing steps of action for schools, communities, and government officials to reform American middle schools. In the mid-1980s, a committee of educators, counselors, and administrators began exploring the concept of a sixth through eighth grade middle school that would better fit and address the learning needs of adolescents in those grades. The implementation of the middle school model proved to successfully impact the academic, behavioral, and social aspects of middle school students (Carnegie, 1989).

A later review of the evolution of the middle school model and updated objectives concerning young adolescents was The Carnegie Corporation's *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* (Jackson & Davis, 2000). The foundation of effective middle schools is built on three concepts: academic excellence, social equity, and developmental responsiveness. Jackson and Davis stated that the objectives of the middle school model included teaching a standards-based curriculum with differentiated instructional methods along with varying strategies of assessment that better fit the

developmental needs young adolescents. Advisory programs were established in middle schools that allowed teachers to assist students with study skills, organizational issues, and to provide an opportunity for students to discuss school-related social issues with their teacher and peers. Elective classes such as physical education, music, art, and foreign languages were added and students were often allowed to choose the elective classes they wanted to enroll in. Another goal of the middle school structure was creation of a sense of community that would allow close relationships between teachers and students, fostering positive social interactions and promoting collaboration within a safe, positive environment (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Most recently, the National Middle School Association (NMSA) released *This We Believe* (2010) which focuses on middle school reform and highlights several components of successful middle schools. At the core of American middle schools is the challenge to recognize the rapid changes affecting young adolescents in many areas of development (personal and social, organizational, and academic) and creating an environment where student achievement is accomplished through addressing student needs on all levels. The NMSA listed the four essential attributes of successful educational programs for young adolescents as being developmentally responsive, challenging, empowering, and equitable. Developmentally responsive aspects include school organization, policies, curriculum, and instructional practices that appropriately address adolescent needs. Middle schools must challenge all members of the learning community to reach high levels of achievement and empower students with the knowledge and skills to become successful members of society. The school environment within middle schools must be equitable in order to provide equal opportunities for all

students with various backgrounds and skill levels to grow and learn together (NMSA, 2010).

Jackson and Davis (2000) explained that the transformation from the departmentalized structure of teachers to the interdisciplinary structure, often referred to as team teaching, was found to more effectively meet the learning needs of adolescents than the traditional junior high structure. In the interdisciplinary model, there are teams of two to five teachers who are assigned the same group of students for the academic year. Core subject teachers in mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies are able to specialize in their subject content and collaborate with team members during planning time. Common planning among interdisciplinary teams is beneficial to teachers for sharing instructional strategies, handling discipline issues, and collaboration within subject areas (Cook & Faulkner, 2010). Jackson and Davis (2000) stated that the team teaching structure created a more nurturing environment providing students with the familiarity of their teachers and classmates and an appropriate setting for the developmental stage of early adolescence. Team teaching creates the foundation for successful, highly-functional middle schools by creating small learning communities characterized by a sense of family (NMSA, 2010).

In order to better understand the relationship between team teaching and the transition into middle school, fifth grade classroom structures must be considered. Given the complexity of the development of early adolescence, creating an appropriate instructional climate designed to address the unique developmental needs of young students is crucial for appropriate student development (Jackson & Davis, 2000). While the research is limited to specific reasons for implementation of each teaching structure,

elementary schools utilize both self-contained and team teaching structures. Elementary teachers are commonly trained to be generalists who teach all subjects (math, science, social studies, and language arts) throughout the school year. In this traditional, self-contained setting, teachers can effectively connect various subjects into a single standard with the same students throughout the day and school year (Hood, 2008).

Nelson and Landel (2007) explained that few elementary teachers have degrees or extensive training in math and science instruction and few are hired to teach those subjects. With the majority of the instructional time devoted to writing and reading, elementary students often receive inadequate instruction in math and science in the self-contained teaching structure.

Hood (2008) noted that with the increased pressure of standardized testing in language arts, math, and science in elementary school, the team teaching model of specializing in a specific subject has become more common. The NMSA (2010) stated that effective team teaching leads to increased student achievement, an enhanced school climate, and positive student attitudes. By utilizing the team teaching structure in elementary school, students acquire deeper content knowledge within each subject and may benefit by being more prepared for the transition into middle school than those students in the traditional self-contained structure (Nelson & Landel, 2007).

Along with elementary classroom structure, the socioeconomic status (SES) and gender of students serve as factors influencing student achievement and discipline referrals. As part of the middle school design, there is a requirement for equity in outcomes involving all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or family income (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Research has shown that academic achievement is related to

student SES and gender, with boys and low–SES students being lower academic achievers than girls and high-SES students (Cook, 2006). Students with increased discipline referrals achieve lower scores regarding student achievement compared to students with fewer discipline referrals (Freiberg, Huzinec, & Templeton, 2009). The number of discipline referrals during the transition from elementary to middle school increased significantly for low-SES students compared to high-SES students (Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008).

Rusby, Taylor, and Foster (2007) reported that students who were identified by their kindergarten teacher as at-risk because of their behavior had significantly lower SES levels. Students identified as at-risk are more likely to experience academic and behavioral problems including low test scores, increased retention rates, increased discipline referrals, and higher dropout rates (Hickman, Bartholomew, Mathwig, & Heinrich, 2008). Malaspina and Rimm-Kaufman (2008) noted that socio-emotional and behavior problems account for a decline in academic achievement, and that over time, students exhibiting those behaviors fell further behind their peers academically. Friend and Degen (2007) found large discrepancies between all students and the percentage of low-SES students enrolled in advanced science and English classes in the sixth and seventh grades. Interestingly, teachers exhibited lower academic expectations for low-SES students and judged low-SES students less favorably than high-SES students (Auwarter & Arugute, 2008).

Research has shown that the middle school concept is difficult for some students as they transition into the sixth grade. Many middle school students have shown declines in academic achievement and motivation while developing negative perceptions toward

their school environment (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Students are allotted fewer opportunities to participate in class, are subjected to increased whole-class instruction, and experience limited freedom regarding decision making within classroom instruction (Eccles et al., 1993). The achievement gaps between high school graduates and dropouts widen greatly during the transition into middle school, and "as students progressed from kindergarten to middle school, they evolved into two disparate groups" (Hickman et al., 2008, p. 12). Eccles et al. added that ability grouping and comparison of student ability within the middle school environment are detrimental to self-esteem and school motivation. Furthermore, increases in negative behaviors occur in middle school, including referrals, apathy, and truancy, compared to elementary school (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Given these data for students who struggle during their transition into middle school, further analysis of the middle school environment, in particular classroom structure, should be conducted regarding the transition experience for adolescents.

Problem Statement

The transition into middle school brings a myriad of complex issues and opportunities for students. School leaders must have effective transition programs in place in both elementary and middle school in order to promote a successful transition into middle school. Previous research has covered several aspects of the three identified themes of middle school transition. The studies identified under the personal and social, organizational, and academic themes provide a wealth of information regarding the stressors and issues that impact the academic achievement of students during their transition to middle school.

While various studies have been analyzed, few studies, if any, have focused on the impact of the fifth grade classroom structure and its relationship to students' adjustment to the team teaching classroom structure of middle school. The gap in the research is due partly to more elementary schools recently implementing the team teaching setting in the fifth grade. While past research has examined the relationship between student behavior and academic achievement, there is little research on the impact of student behavior and elementary classroom structure specific to gender and socio-economic status of students.

As a middle school teacher, the researcher has seen many students enter middle school without the needed supports in place and witnessed sixth grade students struggle to adapt to their new school climate. The varying classroom structures at feeder elementary schools can create a disadvantage for some sixth grade students who must adjust to the team teaching structure in middle school.

By attaining a better understanding of the specific factors that cause increased negative student perceptions of middle school, school leaders may be better prepared to handle the discipline issues associated with middle school transition. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between fifth grade classroom setting (team teaching vs. self-contained) and sixth grade student behavior. The gender and the socio-economic status of transitioning students also served as variables of the study. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine middle school students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school based on elementary classroom structure.

Research Questions

The primary focus of this study centered on different organizational structures that adolescent students experience as they transition to middle school from elementary school. In particular, this study focused on the relationship between elementary classroom structure and middle school student behavior and perceptions during their transition experience. The following overarching question guided this study: What is the relationship between elementary classroom structure and practice and middle school students' perceptions and behavior? In addition, the following research questions were examined:

1. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and practice and middle school students' discipline referrals?
2. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and student disciplinary referrals based on gender and student socio-economic status?
3. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' personal and social perceptions?
4. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' organizational perceptions?
5. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' academic perceptions?

Conceptual Framework

The issues for school leaders and students associated with the transition to middle school may be best described by the *person-environment fit* theme developed by Eccles

and Midgley (1989). The person-environment fit relates to the interaction of the developmental needs of adolescents with the developmental opportunities of the environment provided and the social opportunities given by adults. Eccles et al. (1993) suggested that a negative person-environment fit was found to exist between most middle school environments and the individual maturation needs of students. This mismatch between student developmental needs and elements of middle school results in declines in academic motivation and negative attitudes toward school which may result in a negative transition experience into middle school (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). The person-environment fit theory is the appropriate framework for this study as it suggests the importance of exploring the developmental needs of adolescents and the middle school environment. Furthermore, due to this study's focus on elementary classroom structure and its impact on student behavior and the overall transition experience of each student, the person-environment fit served a practical purpose in determining the outcomes of this study.

Significance of the Study

A study of fifth grade classroom structure and its impact on sixth grade student behavior during the transition to middle school was important for several reasons. The discipline referral data of sixth grade students informed elementary and middle school principals about the impact of the elementary classroom setting and its effect on the team teaching structure of middle school. Additional data may provide an opportunity for further collaboration between elementary and middle school leaders to create a more nurturing and supportive transition process for all students. Although a few studies have been conducted on the impact of elementary classroom settings on sixth grade student

behavior, they were not specific to gender and the socio-economic status (SES) of students. Acquiring a deeper understanding of students' perceptions of their middle school transition experience may allow school leaders to implement needed assistance or supports that promote a positive transition experience for students. This study may also be significant in addressing the high school dropout rate issue. Few studies, if any, have analyzed student perceptions of their middle school transition experience as a stumbling block regarding their behavioral motivation. By identifying potential at-risk students at an earlier behavioral stage, transition programs that may serve as effective dropout preventions may be put in place by school leaders as students enter high school.

Procedures

This study was a non-experimental quantitative design using an anonymous survey. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between fifth grade classroom setting (team teaching vs. self-contained) and sixth grade student behavior. The gender and the socio-economic status of transitioning students served as variables of the study. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine middle school students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school based on elementary classroom structure. The study was conducted in a small, rural school district in the Southeastern region of the United States. The sample consisted of 230 sixth grade students who were selected using a convenience sampling technique.

For the first aspect of the study, the relationship between elementary classroom structures, gender, and student socio-economic status and student behavior were analyzed. The *Student Transition Questionnaire* (Akos, 2002) (Appendix A) was administered to sixth grade students at Green Middle School anonymously in order to

compare student perceptions of the middle school transition experience based on two different fifth grade classroom structures, team teaching or self-contained. Of the 230 sixth grade students at Green Middle School, 164 students returned the parent consent and student assent forms signed and participated in taking the Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002). Students were identified by their fifth grade classroom structure and the results from the data on their perceptions were organized into tables and discussed in the findings. The results from this study added suggestions to the existing research regarding the relationship between fifth grade classroom structures and the transition into middle school.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

There were several limitations to this study that should be considered. The quantitative nature of the study limited the opinions of the selected participants in the study. The School Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002) contained items related to middle school transition based on previous literature. There may have been important aspects of the participants' middle school transition experience not included on the survey which would have limited authentic data from the perceptions of the participants. The discipline practices among the feeder elementary schools in this study may have varied. Discipline referral data was essential to this study and any inconsistencies that may have existed among elementary principals would have impacted the study. The convenience sampling of the subjects limited the generalizability of the findings due to the small number of participants and the lack of minority students. The students' perceptions of their middle school experience were limited to the first semester of their sixth grade school year. A longitudinal design that assessed the students' perceptions

both before and after their transition into middle school would have minimized the limitations. A myriad of factors impact student achievement and behavior during the middle school transition experience and this study did not attempt to control those various variables.

The delimitations of this study included the selection of only one middle school and three feeder elementary schools. Also, the selected school district is a small, rural setting in the Southeastern region of the United States. Participation in the survey was limited to only those students who returned consent forms signed by their parent(s) or guardians. All special education students in inclusion classroom settings and who had no environmental setting accommodations were included in the survey. Special education students who received an alternate setting throughout the school day which were not included in the self-contained and team teaching models were not included in the study.

The researcher assumed that students responding to the survey were honest regarding their perceptions of their middle school transition experience. While the School Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002) had been administered in a previous study and altered specifically for this study, it was assumed the survey measured what it purports to measure regarding middle school transition. The researcher assumed to have access to pertinent subject data.

Definition of Terms

Academic Construct. The academic construct is a variable consisting of factors that affect the learning process and student achievement of a student during the middle school transition experience.

Core-Content Subjects. The core-content subjects are Mathematics, Reading, Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies.

Elementary Classroom Structure. The elementary classroom structure of a student refers to the fifth grade instructional organizational model. The classroom structures are self-contained and team teaching.

Middle School Transition. The middle school transition is the process of students completing their fifth grade in an elementary school building and then moving to a different building for sixth grade in a sixth through eighth grade middle school.

Organizational Construct. The organizational construct is a variable consisting of factors involving procedural issues such as changing classes, new rules, and school expectations during the middle school transition experience.

Personal and Social Construct. The personal and social construct is a variable consisting of factors involving pubertal developments, peer relationships, and emotional changes of adolescents during the middle school transition experience.

Self-Contained Classroom Structure. The self-contained classroom structure is the regular education classroom in which one teacher delivers the majority of the instruction of the core content subjects to the same group of students throughout the school year. Students generally are in the same classroom each day with the same teacher.

Socio-Economic Status (SES). The SES for this study is defined by those subjects qualifying for free or reduced lunch status. If a subject is eligible and receives a free or reduced lunch, he or she is classified as economically disadvantaged.

Team Teaching Classroom Structure. The team teaching classroom structure is the regular education classroom which involves two or more teachers responsible for the core content subjects for the same group of students throughout the school year. Students usually change classroom locations for each class.

Chapter Summary

As students transition into middle school, it is critical that they are well-prepared to address the upcoming challenges of middle school. Fortunately, many students experience a smooth transition into middle school and are successful in adapting to their new surroundings. However, some students struggle with the social and personal, organizational, and academic changes associated with moving into a middle school. For many sixth grade students, the middle school transition can be full of anxiety and stress as they adjust to their new surroundings. However, by analyzing the impact of elementary classroom structures on student behavior and student perceptions of their transition experience, school leaders may be better informed to create positive learning environments for fifth grade students which promote a successful transition to middle school. By using the person-environment fit theory as a guide for this study, the researcher analyzed the relationship between fifth grade classroom structure (team teaching and self-contained) and student behavior, accounting for gender and socio-economic status of each student. Using Akos' Student Transition Questionnaire, the study gave insight into student perceptions of their transition experience, and data may allow school administrators to better understand the process of middle school transition and the many facets that affect each student. It is hoped that the study will fill the gap in

the research concerning elementary classroom structures and the impact on student transition into middle school.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The transition to a new learning environment can be an exciting and challenging process for adolescent students. For sixth grade students making the transition into middle school, progress and success during the sixth grade year varies as much as the personalities and behaviors of individual students. Some students flourish when presented with the opportunities of a different building, meeting new friends, and establishing a new identity after elementary school. An infusion of self-confidence and excitement prompts many students to excel in activities, such as band, athletics, and other school organizations that were not offered in elementary school.

In order to better understand the transition into middle school, one must first understand the common practices associated with the middle grades experience. Early adolescence is a time of rapid physical, intellectual, emotional, and social change that occurs at different times and rates for each adolescent. As young people enter puberty, growth and development is more rapid during this period than during any other developmental stage other than infancy (Carnegie, 1989). For the first time in their lives, adolescents are given opportunities to create their own identity, progress into new social roles, and develop their own code of ethics to guide their behavior. The capacity for creative thinking increases significantly for young people, and they begin acquire the skills and mental capability to participate in expanded activities (Jackson & Davis, 2000). The changes in thinking practices include individual reflection, personal application to worldly issues, and changes in their perceptions of their environment. With adolescent

cognitive growth occurring continuously, middle school students require multiple forms of instruction and experimental learning in order to fully develop (NMSA, 2010).

Many innovations were made during the middle school movement to accommodate the unique needs of young adolescent individuals. Team teaching, as the common component of the middle school learning environment, is the key to academically successful schools because teams provide a foundation for a sense of family and a strong learning community (NMSA, 2010). Advisory periods can provide opportunities for development of interpersonal bonds between teachers and students, strengthening organizational and study skills and various activities associated with individual development (Jackson & Davis, 2000). NMSA (2010) noted that developmentally responsive middle schools include "school-wide services and programs such as guidance, clubs and interest groups, music and drama productions, student government, service activities, and sports" (p. 17). Middle school students who experience positive peer relationships (Nelson & DeBacker, 2008), strong connections to their school (LaRusso et al., 2008), and engage in cooperative learning activities generally attain higher levels of student achievement (Roseth et al., 2008).

However, for other students, the transition to middle school can prove to be a period of difficulty, awkwardness, and an overall struggle in adolescent life. Unfortunately, many young adolescents struggle through their experience in middle school and do not satisfy basic human needs such as caring relationships with adults, guidance with dealing with psychological and biological changes of puberty, and establishing positive peer relationships (Carnegie, 1989). Middle school students may develop negative perceptions of their school climate and surroundings which contribute

to declines in academic achievement and motivation (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Following the transition into middle school, many students find their new surroundings less supportive than elementary school and often experience losses in self-esteem and student achievement (Eccles & Midgley, 1989).

The prominent theme that will guide this research on middle school transition involving adolescents is the person-environment fit theory developed by Eccles and Midgley (1989). Many associate the challenges of middle school transition with two simultaneous changes for adolescents: puberty and a new school environment. Eccles and Midgley (1989) identified several cognitive, physical, and social-emotional needs of young adolescents and stage-specific developmental needs as students enter middle school. Specifically, (a) opportunities for decision-making to develop their intellectual skills and fulfill their desire for personal autonomy; (b) the need for continuity of classmates throughout the school day to promote positive friendship and peer bonding; (c) extensive interaction with teachers to fulfill the need for non-parental role models due to the increased feeling of emotional independence from parents; and (d) a need for academic development in a relatively non-competitive environment due to puberty and changes related to self-perception that cause insecurities and vulnerability to competition and peer comparison.

Eccles et al. (1993) provided a framework for later research and developments regarding middle school transition. The developmental and learning needs of young adolescents, as suggested by Eccles and her colleagues, within the framework of the middle school environment are further discussed in the review of the literature under

team teaching, discipline, personal and social, organizational, and academic factors of middle school transition.

After adolescent developmental needs were identified, Eccles and Midgley (1989) then studied the instructional and social changes that young adolescents experience during the transition into middle school. The following normative changes in the middle school classroom environment were identified as related to adolescent developmental needs: (a) less intimate and supportive student-teacher relationships due to the larger class sizes; (b) increased teacher-centered instruction and tougher discipline policies; (c) limited opportunities for student autonomy of classroom assignments; (d) increased academic standards, broader curriculum, and less instruction differentiation; and (e) tougher grading policies by classroom teachers. In sum, the negative factors of middle school include increases in ability grouping, whole-class task instruction and organization, and comparative and public evaluation which all contribute to a negative fit in relation to adolescent development needs (Eccles & Midgley, 1989).

Contemporary research is included in the following literature review of middle school transition research and provides connections to the person-environment fit theory. With this study focusing on the effect of elementary classroom structures on student behavior and student perceptions of their transition experience, the person-environment fit provides the appropriate framework to guide the study.

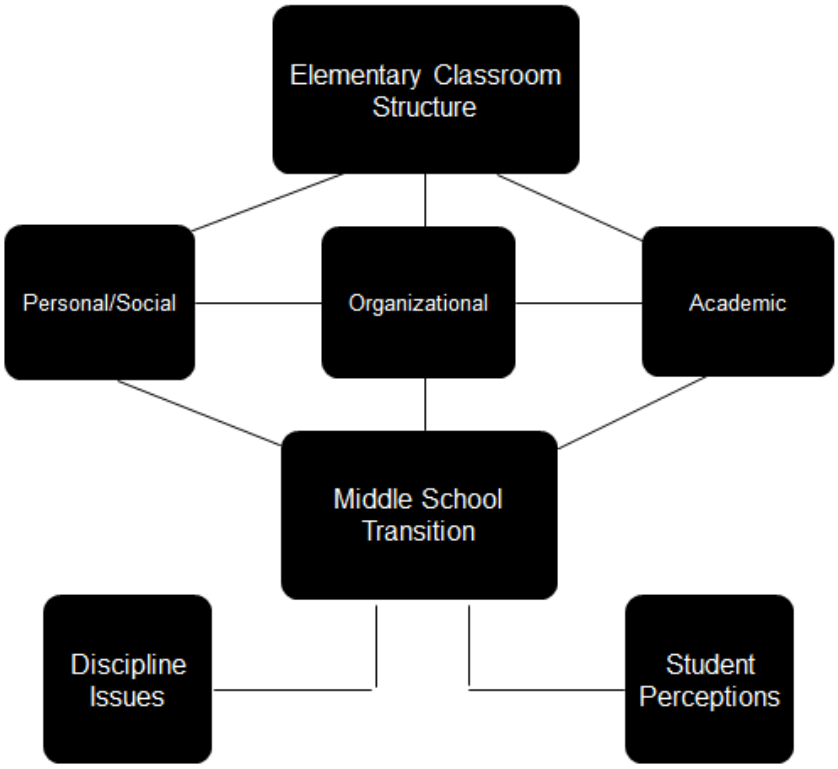

Figure 1. The study of student perceptions of the middle school transition experience and student behavior within varying classroom structures will be guided by the person-fit environment theory (Eccles & Midgley, 1989).

The following literature review will focus on many aspects of middle school transition, including the various models and components of team teaching, discipline, and the three themes of personal/social, organizational, and academic transition factors. Each theme highlights issues associated with middle school transition and how it impacts student achievement and the experience across the transition into middle school.

Team Teaching

For nearly a century, researchers and educators concerned with improving the educational quality of school climates, have periodically focused on the serious mismatches between the needs of young adolescents and the educational organization of schools (Eccles et al, 1993; Erb, 2001; Jackson & Davis, 2000). When reviewing the middle school movement from a historical standpoint, the implementation of team teaching was the first organizational step toward increasing student achievement by increasing the sense of belonging for students (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Erb (2001), having studied team teaching extensively, reported that benefits of team teaching for students include improvements in attitude toward school and learning. Teaming helped change public perceptions of schools as the new middle schools were viewed as more nurturing for students who were in the development stage of early adolescence (Friend & Thompson, 2010). The NMSA (2010) emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary teams that build a sense of community and increased curriculum integration. Effective team teaching has been shown to improve academic achievement for students with different types of backgrounds and across many grade levels (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Erb, 2001; NMSA, 2010).

While the structure and dynamics of a team can vary, the common understanding of team teaching can be described as two or more teachers sharing responsibility for the curriculum, instruction, and assessment of a common group of students (Jackson & Davis, 2000; NMSA, 2010). Team teaching is commonly referenced as *interdisciplinary teaching* or *teaming*, and the common group of teachers and students in the team teaching structure are called *teams* or *pods* (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Often large middle schools are subdivided into schools-within-a-school and this model is associated with the smaller learning community movement (NMSA, 2010). Based on observations, the ratio should not exceed 25 students to one teacher on a team in order to maintain positive student outcomes. Effective research-based principals of team teaching include providing sufficient planning time for each team, declaring team areas within the school building, and ensuring continuity among team teachers over a number of years (Erb, 2001).

When evaluating the effectiveness of team teaching in middle school, the importance of relationships between teachers and students is evident. Erb (2001) emphasized that the connectedness between students and teachers has been shown to improve teacher morale as well as the organizational climate and support for students. In the team teaching setting, teachers successfully establish supportive relationships with individual students and provide motivation for student development in many areas of their academics (Strahan, 2008). Wallace (2007) stated that smaller numbers of students on teams allows for more time to develop relationships and increases social bonding between students and teachers. Instead of using academic tracking, middle schools use cooperative learning groups, enrichment programs, and independent study periods in order to accommodate the variety of student competencies, interests, and abilities

(NMSA, 2010). The cookie cutter approach to the organizational structure of middle schools proved to provide an inappropriate learning environment for early adolescence (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Teachers on established and successful teams reported high levels of morale and peer cohesiveness, a unified system in supporting their students, and open communication as key components to their success (Cook & Faulkner, 2010).

A key issue for all middle school administrators and teachers is a lack of common planning time within interdisciplinary teams. Teachers need the time to plan and develop assessments appropriate for curriculum, refine instructional strategies, and collaborate with team members to improve student achievement (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Cook and Faulkner (2010) explained that common planning among teams can include three types of planning (interdisciplinary team, grade level, and professional learning) with each functioning to address all concerns and needs within the team.

The interdisciplinary planning focused on individual student academic and behavior issues, parent conferences, guidance and support, and planning integrated lessons of instruction. During grade level planning, teachers address school policies and common assessment demands, homework procedures, and tasks such as field trips and special programs. Curriculum alignment, discussion of student assessment data, and the development of common assessments were all aspects of professional learning planning activities (Cook & Faulkner, 2010).

Friend and Thompson (2010) noted that common planning among teams allowed opportunities for teachers to discuss and develop specific plans for student learning needs, including low and high achieving students. Through collaboration, interdisciplinary units of instruction can be implemented that require higher order

thinking skills and involve hands on activities. Common planning is essential for team teaching to be successful (Erb, 2001).

Recent studies have shown that team teaching has not only improved the morale of teachers (Cook & Faulkner, 2010), but it has promoted professional growth among young teachers in various areas of effective teaching. Strahan and Hedt (2009) conducted a case study of two first-year teachers who worked together on a two-teacher team. With the assistance of the school's literacy coach, the teachers took part in collaborative activities during their planning time which included assessing student needs, discussing instructional strategies, developing cross-curricular interdisciplinary units, and identifying available teacher resources. The professional growth patterns of the teachers and documented student accomplishments suggest the possibilities of promoting professional development of teachers through interdisciplinary team teaching. Graham (2007) conducted a study in which middle school teachers from the same grade level and subject area engaged in weekly professional learning activities focusing on improving teachers' skills, knowledge of their curriculum content, and teacher classroom practices. Results indicated that professional learning activities have the potential to achieve significant improvement in teacher effectiveness.

There are various configurations regarding team teaching and how a team can be put together. Wallace (2007) explained that the four-teacher team is the most common and logical design with one teacher specialist in each of the core subject areas. In this arrangement, teachers have the opportunity to engage in interdisciplinary teaching and common planning allows for collaboration and addressing student learning needs. The

four-teacher team is best utilized with teachers who have a strong content background and preparation in one subject.

The two-teacher team is commonly used in sixth grade to assist in providing a positive transition from the one teacher, self-contained classroom commonly found in elementary schools to the four- and five-teacher designs found in many seventh and eighth grades in middle school. Subject areas are taught according to the strengths and interests of each teacher. In this design, one teacher may have primary responsibility for science and math while the other teacher handles social studies and science (Wallace, 2007). The two- or three-teacher teams require teachers to teach more than one subject which enhances opportunities for curricular integration (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Wallace (2007) added that the two-teacher setup allows teachers and students to spend more time together throughout the day and strengthens the social bonds between teachers and students as well as increasing peer interaction opportunities. However, Jackson and Davis (2000) stated that negative factors involving the two-teacher team include the requirement for teachers to be certified in more than one subject and the limited number of expert teachers in two or more subjects.

The term *team teaching* has a different meaning when considering students with special learning needs. Co-teaching, also referred to as inclusion, is another method of team teaching which is the sharing of instruction between a general education teacher and a special education teacher within a classroom that contains students with diverse learning needs, including students with learning disabilities (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).

Important responsibilities accompany team teaching students with special learning needs, including planning and teaching lessons, organizing instructional materials, and appropriately modifying assessments according to student disabilities. These responsibilities must be clearly delegated between the two teachers. Co-teachers must be willing to compromise and collaborate on all aspects of instruction in order for a healthy teaching relationship to develop. Effective communication is essential for co-teachers to effectively meet student academic and social developmental needs (Sileo, 2011).

Friend et al. (2010) explained that interest and attention to co-teaching has intensified recently in education, mostly due to two factors. When the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was enacted, great commitment was made to students with learning disabilities. This commitment included: (a) a requirement for all students to have equal access to the general curriculum; (b) all teachers being required to be highly qualified; and, (c) accountability to ensure special education students' performance is included in state standardized testing scores. The second factor intensifying interest and attention to co-teaching was the recent reauthorization of the Disabilities Education Act of 2004 that requires special education students to be instructed in a least restricted classroom environment, which includes a co-teaching classroom. Friend and Thompson (2010) noted that many schools paired special education resource teachers with interdisciplinary teams in order to better communicate and meet the needs of students with Individualized Education Plans (I.E.P.).

While specific components of co-teaching can vary as much as teacher personalities, there are six widely accepted co-teaching structures that teachers utilize based on student needs and the intended purpose of the instruction (Friend et al., 2010).

The six approaches and variations of the co-teaching models that are discussed in various studies (Friend et al., 2010; Sileo, 2011) are shown in Figure 2.

One Teach, One Observe	When one teacher is responsible for whole group instruction while the other teacher observes the students and gathers information on their academic, social, and behavioral skills. This co-teaching structure allows co-teachers an opportunity to gather information about their students and each other as well.
Parallel Teaching	When two teachers, each with half of the students in class, present the same material for the primary purpose of fostering instructional differentiation and increasing student participation.
Station Teaching (Rotational Teaching)	When the co-teachers arrange three instructional stations with the students rotating through each station. Each co-teacher instructs a station and the third group of students work independently. The stations should be non-sequential.
Alternative Teaching	When one teacher teaches the majority of the class and the other teacher works with a small group of students. The small grouping should address specific student needs through pre-teaching, remediation, alternate assessments, and enrichment.
One Teach, One Assist	When one teacher instructs the whole group and the other teacher circulates throughout the classroom to individually assist students.
Team Teaching (Traditional Co-Teaching)	When both teachers deliver instruction simultaneously to a large group of students. Both teachers can lead by lecturing and give opposing views on issues and promote debate and discussion among the students. This structure affords the team teachers the chance to interact with the students.

Figure 2. Descriptions of co-teaching structures.

By using these models, co-teachers can vary instructional strategies and classroom structure to address the I.E.P. goals and objectives of students with disabilities while challenging the remaining students within the classroom (Friend et al., 2010). By instructing all students with various learning strengths and weaknesses within the same setting, effective co-teaching practices ensure that every student is academically challenged and provided a relevant learning opportunity (NMSA, 2010).

Discipline

When analyzing student behavior and its relationship with the transition into middle school, the connection between discipline referrals and student achievement should be considered. When students misbehave, they are disruptive to classmates, less connected to their teacher and instruction, and consequently perform poorly academically (Freiburg, 2009). Research indicates a dramatic increase in discipline problems in middle school compared to elementary school (Algozzine, Christian, Marr, McClanahan, & White, 2008; Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Theriot & Dupper, 2010; Spaulding et al., 2010). In their study elementary and middle school discipline referrals, Theriot and Dupper (2010) found that only 8% of fifth graders received discipline referrals while 26% of sixth graders were written up for an infraction, indicating an 18% increase in the number of referrals from fifth to sixth grade. Of all students who received a discipline referral, 8% of the fifth graders received in-school suspension (ISS) while 67% of sixth graders received ISS. However, comparing the same groups, 71% of elementary students with write-ups received out-of-school suspension (OSS) compared to 43% of sixth grade students who received a write-up (Theriot & Dupper, 2010).

In following discipline patterns among students, Spaulding et al. (2010) reported that the majority of students in all grade levels received very few discipline referrals. Of students in grades K-12, 89% of elementary, 73% of middle school, and 67% of high school students received one or zero referrals. In a similar study, Algozzine et al. (2008) reported that approximately 4% of the school population accounted for nearly half (46%) of the school's discipline referral total. Of the 38 teachers at the school in the study, eight teachers were responsible for approximately half of the school discipline referrals.

Between kindergarten and fifth grade, the number of discipline referrals increased overall as students moved up grade levels, with fifth graders receiving the highest number of referrals.

The types of problem behaviors were analyzed, and Algozzine et al. (2008) reported that the problem behaviors that most often occurred were disruption, disrespect, and aggression/fighting, with 42% of the referrals being for disruption. Spaulding et al. (2010) noted that problem behaviors resulting in referrals "changed from peer-directed behavior (i.e., predominantly fighting) in elementary school to more adult-directed behavior (i.e., defiance and disruption) in middle school" (p. 79). Both elementary and middle school students received more discipline referrals in the afternoon, occurring around and immediately following lunchtime.

The impact of student perceptions of school climate on discipline issues was studied. Research shows that adolescents' positive perceptions of school climate are both directly and indirectly related to fewer behavioral problems, including substance abuse and bullying (LaRusso, Romer, & Selman, 2008). Wang, Selman, Dishion, and Stormshak (2010) found that middle school students reported a gradual decrease in their perceptions of a positive school climate from grades six through eight. As the positive perceptions of school climate decreased through their middle school years, the level of problem behavior increased.

Of all discipline referrals reported, approximately 75% occurred within the classroom (Algozzine et al., 2008; Spaulding et al., 2010). Wang et al. (2010) explained that the correlation between perception of school climate and problem behavior were found to be significant since lower levels of problem behavior were associated with

positive perceptions of school climate. Algozzine et al. (2008) noted that the increased discipline infractions within the classroom may have resulted from students attempting to avoid completing difficult academic tasks and assignments. Males showed higher levels of behavior problems and reported increased negative perceptions of school climate than females; but, overall, both showed a gradual increase in problem behaviors and decreased positive perceptions of school climate in grades six through eight (Wang et al., 2010).

The factors associated with pubertal development may play a role in increased discipline referrals for young adolescents. Carnegie (1989) explained that adolescent development is a period "of trial and error, of vulnerability to emotional hurt and humiliation, of anxiety and uncertainty that are sources of unevenness of emotions and behavior associated with the age" (p. 21). As middle school students attempt to establish new social roles and an evolving identity, inconsistent behavior patterns may emerge for adolescents who struggle to balance the physical and emotional changes that accompany puberty. Young people develop greater capacity for complex thinking and are better equipped to make decisions when faced with new circumstances; but their lack of experience can result in poor decisions and negative behaviors (Jackson & Davis, 2000). As young adolescents desire peer acceptance and attempt to associate themselves with certain social groups, their behavior is influenced by their environment and outside influences such as the media. Young people, in their quest for independence, may test the boundaries of appropriate and inappropriate behavior and struggle between choosing right and wrong (NMSA, 2010).

When the social environment of the transition year does not fit the psychological needs of adolescents, students may experience a loss of motivation and interest in school,

and student behavior will be negatively impacted (Eccles et al., 1993). When analyzing student demographics and discipline referrals, there were increased discipline referrals involving males (Algozzine et al., 2008; Rusby et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2010), students of lower socio-economic status, and ethnic minority students (Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Theriot & Dupper, 2010). However, Theriot and Dupper (2010) added that the comparison of the number of subjective and objective infractions raises questions about whether the misbehavior of middle school students increases or the middle school environment is more punitive and has harsher discipline policies for misbehavior.

Personal and Social Factors and School Transition

Perhaps the most unpredictable changes that occur during the transition to middle school involve the personal and social aspects of adolescents. Students may struggle with establishing an identity in their new surroundings in middle school, and these personal factors can have a negative impact on the transition experience. The factors associated with the personal and social theme of middle school transition are puberty, self-concept, peer acceptance, school connectedness, bullying, and peer aggression. As the personal and social factors are considered regarding middle school transition, the person-environment fit theory notes that the pubertal development associated with the psychological changes for adolescents includes a concept of self, peer relationships, and desired intimate relationships (Eccles et al., 1993).

Early adolescence can be characterized by the rapid physical and emotional changes caused by pubertal growth. As young people develop, hormonal shifts trigger physical changes such as increases in weight and height, abrupt muscle and bone growth, and changes in complexion, hair, and voice (NMSA, 2010). Dramatic physical,

emotional, and social changes emerge due to sexual development and a growing capacity to have sexual relations and reproduce (Carnegie, 1989). Females generally experience physical maturation earlier than males and the varying growth rates for each individual may cause awkwardness and embarrassment during the various developmental stages (NMSA, 2010). Amid the many concurrent physical and emotional transformations, adolescents are attempting to establish their own identity, adapt to new social relationships, and create their own individual temperament (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Self-concept is defined as an individual's beliefs about and evaluation of his or her characteristics, roles, abilities, and relationships. Early adolescents clearly define their sense of ability in different areas, and the doubts of sixth grade students are generally more deep-seated than in elementary school (Wigfield &Wagner, 2005). Esch and Zullig (2008) reported middle school students who considered themselves overweight had negative self-perceptions of their appearance and abilities. In the study, females with self-perceptions of being overweight often ate less food and took diet pills to lose weight. Overall, students with negative self-perceptions of their weight reported significantly higher levels of life dissatisfaction than students considered to be about the appropriate weight (Esch & Zullig, 2008). Physical appearance was the most powerful predictor of self-esteem levels for adolescents, and self-esteem showed to predict levels of school performance (Kutob, Senf, Crago, & Shisslak, 2010).

Although slightly outdated, Barber and Olsen (2004) conducted a study that provided insightful findings on adolescents' self-concept during their middle school transition experience. Their study revealed positive effects of the middle school transition on self-concept for sixth graders. The structure of the sixth grade in the study

featured small, family-like pods, and students experienced increased support from teachers, higher self-esteem, and less depression. Interestingly, students progressing from the sixth grade to the seventh at the same school experienced significant negative experiences involving school environment, psychological functioning, behavior issues, and interpersonal competence. This decrease in positive effects was associated with the move from the small pod atmosphere of sixth grade to a more traditional middle school setting for the seventh grade, which included more teachers, lower quality relationships with teachers and students, and less support from teachers and administration (Barber & Olsen, 2004). Parker (2009) deduced that groups of adolescent students experienced stable ratings of self-concept as they entered middle school, then experienced positive increases as their sixth grade year progressed, including a decrease in anxiety.

Another predictor of adjustment to middle school transition is the role of peer acceptance, social withdrawal, and the quality of friendships. As students transition into middle school, the role of peer relationships increases in the adolescent's life. Both intensity and intimacy increase in peer relationships as adolescents attempt to establish their identity within their new school climate (Eccles et al., 1993). Young adolescents' need for peer acceptance is often strong and the desire to be included in social groups can lead to a shift in allegiance from adults to peers (NMSA, 2010). Oh et al. (2008) found that 7% of sixth graders experience increased social withdrawal during the transition to middle school. Kingery and Erdley (2007) found that students with low levels of peer acceptance, fewer friends, and/or low quality of friendships in fifth grade generally had increased feelings of loneliness and lower levels of school involvement prior to

transition. Students who felt valued and respected by their peers reported higher motivation levels toward academic achievement (Nelson & DeBacker, 2008).

Early social competence predicted reduced discipline issues as students who were rated by their teachers as more socially competent were less likely to show discipline referral increases during transition (Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008). Adolescents who were socially competent displayed positive attitudes toward school and adjusted to new experiences and surroundings more effectively than students with lower levels of social competence (Prelow, Loukas, & Jordan-Green, 2007). The inability to socialize with peers and adults can interfere with an adolescents' normative development and consequently with their social, behavioral, and academic adjustment (Obradovic, Burt, Long, & Masten, 2008).

Veronneau and Dishion (2010) found that children who are rejected by their peers experience reduced accessibility to well-balanced peers from whom they could learn and acquire self-control, coping skills, and social competence. The rejected adolescents, particularly among male students, often feel angry and display aggressive behaviors toward their peers (Veronnean & Dishion, 2010). Bellmore (2011) found that the GPAs of socially rejected students were consistently lower than those of students who were socially accepted. The perceived level of a best friend's academic valuing was found to impact a student's learning, responsibility, and approval goals (Nelson & DeBacker, 2008). Oh et al. (2008) suggested that students making the transition to middle school who had a socially withdrawn best friend experienced an increase in social withdrawal over time. This finding revealed the significance of the impact of characteristics of friendships and predicting developmental trajectories regarding social withdrawal (Oh et

al., 2008). Furthermore, peer rejection and unpopularity in the fifth grade contributed to lower GPAs for students during the sixth grade, indicating that the effects of peer experiences in elementary school may carry over to middle school (Bellmore, 2008). Students with low peer acceptance are more likely to experience academic (Bellmore, 2008), behavioral (Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008), emotional, and peer difficulties during transition to middle school (Kingery & Erdley, 2007).

Peer acceptance was highly stable during transition, but the number of friends for both boys and girls decreased significantly across time. Specific interventions for students with low peer acceptance should focus on coping skills, problem solving, and social skills (Kingery & Erdley, 2007). However, the classroom structure that students are placed in may affect peer interactions and friendships. Wallace (2007) reported that students in a two-teacher, 50-student team score significantly higher on measures of social bonding to their classmates than a four-teacher, 100-student team. The smaller number of students and minimal changing of classes benefited students in a smaller setting in regard to social bonding. Students in the smaller interdisciplinary team also felt closer to their teachers than students in the larger, four-teacher configuration (Wallace, 2007).

The school connectedness of a student may impact his or her perceptions of the middle school transition experience. Using the Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002), Akos and Galassi (2004) studied student perceptions of their middle school and high school transition and how connected they felt toward their school. Overall, gender as a variable did not differ significantly regarding the perceived difficulty of school transition. However, girls were found to feel more connected to school during the middle

school transition whereas boys felt stronger school connectedness during the transition to high school (Akos & Galassi, 2004a). Research indicates that students who perceive their teachers as supportive and sensitive to their needs are more likely to feel stronger connections to their school and peers (LaRusso et al., 2008). Adolescents who felt valued in the classroom and experienced strong feelings of class belongingness "reported higher self-efficacy and mastery, performance-approach, intimacy, and responsibility goals" (Nelson & DeBacker, 2008, p. 183).

Hines' (2007) work on the impact of divorce on student transition showed that adolescent girls were overall more adjusted than male students. Specifically, girls were better adjusted to dealing with peer pressure, following school rules, and most of the statistically significant academic characteristics. Boys from divorced families were found to struggle with homework, English, math, and adjusting to a larger building. However, boys were more adjusted in building relationships with their classmates, both male and female. Adolescent males also showed more adjustment to physical education than females (Hines, 2007).

Students who are victims of bullying or who bully other students themselves generally have a negative perception of the school's psychosocial environment. Given the negative view of the psychosocial environment of school, these students are more likely to engage in aggressive behavior such as carrying weapons and performing acts of violence than students who do not experience bullying. Students with bullying experiences show higher rates of skipping school and missing classes (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008).

When asked about being prepared to handle bullying within the school, 83% of teachers felt they were prepared to handle issues associated with bullying (Novick & Isaacs, 2010). Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan (2007) found that 86% of teachers reported having effective strategies to address bullying behaviors. Interestingly, the study also revealed that teachers and staff members who felt bullying was a serious problem in their school showed a weaker belief in their ability to effectively handle bullying.

Significant differences, however, were found between teachers and students in the perceived prevalence of bullying incidents in school. A study of elementary teachers and students reported that 71% of teachers and 34% of students felt that 15% of their students were bullied twice or less a month, a 37% discrepancy. Novick and Isaacs (2010) explained that the understanding of bullying behaviors varied from teacher to teacher and that student and teacher perceptions of bullying varied. The varying interpretation of bullying among teachers can lead to inconsistent reporting and handling of potential bullying behaviors (Novick & Isaacs, 2010). Bradshaw et al. (2007) found that teachers were more likely to respond when they witnessed bullying behavior rather than receiving reports from students.

Students who were the victims of cyberbullying and who engaged in cyberbullying activities experienced significantly lower levels of self-esteem than students who experienced little to no cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Smith et al. (2008) reported that girls are more often cybervictims than boys, and cyberbullies were found most often to be female. Cyberbullying incidents occurred less frequently than traditional bullying, and victims felt the impact of cyberbullying was comparable to

traditional bullying. The study also found a correlation between computer use and the frequency of cyberbullying incidents, with those students who use the internet at higher rates experiencing more cyberbullying incidents.

Slovack and Singer (2011) found that school social workers in middle schools felt cyberbullying was significantly more serious than social workers in elementary and high schools. Fifty-five percent of school social workers reported they were equipped to effectively deal with cyberbullying (Slovack & Singer, 2011). However, victims of cyberbullying felt adults were less informed about cyberbullying than traditional bullying, and victims were less likely to report cyberbullying incidents to adults than traditional bullying (Smith et al., 2011).

In order to better understand student behavior during the transition to middle school, social goals should be considered. Social dominance goals are defined as the focus on having power over peers, controlling peers to comply with wishes, and instilling a sense of fear in peers (Keifer & Ryan, 2008). As adolescents pursue performance goals and social-approval goals, great emphasis is put on the social approval of their peers. Therefore, a negative peer environment may be problematic for students who strive to achieve these goals (Nelson & DeBacker, 2008).

While the study is now outdated, Zimmer-Gembeck, Geiger, and Crick (2005) found that positive and negative behaviors of adolescents are recognized by their peers, and that recognition impacts students maintaining and increasing aggressive behaviors, especially among male adolescents. Relational aggression among females increased in the sixth grade, and the increased social behavior is affected by peer social impact and social dominance goals such as being accepted by peers (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2005).

Interestingly, cooperative goal structures within the classroom are associated with a positive relation between student achievement and adolescent social goals (Roseth, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008).

Female adolescents indicated higher importance of positive social behavior regarding social preference compared to boys. Sixth grade boys showed increased physically aggressive behaviors compared to girls, and the male aggressive behavior was associated with social preference. In sum, females were more proactive in making friends and preferred to engage in positive relationships with their peers more than males. Boys were more physically aggressive than girls and indicated they preferred physical contact over positive relational behavior (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2005).

Student behaviors with social dominance goals include acting in disruptive ways during class and putting less effort toward school work. Students focusing on social dominance goals experience negative engagement and lower academic achievement. Female students showed increased levels of social dominance goals in sixth and seventh grades and decreased intimacy goal levels. Also, male students exhibited higher social dominance goals and lower intimacy goals (Keifer & Ryan, 2008).

Organizational Factors and School Transition

There are many factors that should be analyzed when addressing the problems associated with middle school transition and providing students with resources that will promote positive student achievement. In order for effective transition programs to be implemented in middle schools, school leaders, including principals, lead teachers, and county office personnel, should consider the various organizational factors involved with middle school transition. The factors associated with the organizational theme of middle

school transition are extracurricular activities, varying school structures, and differences in discipline policies between elementary and middle schools.

While slightly outdated, Akos (2006) found that grade point average (GPA), students' feelings of connectedness, and perceptions of the positive aspects of student transition are related to participation in extracurricular activities. Adolescents who participated in sports and clubs displayed higher social skills scores compared to their peers who did not participate in those activities outside of school (Howie, Lukacs, Pastor, Reuben, & Mendola, 2010). Male participation in team sports showed a higher GPA in middle school, and a higher GPA was found for both male and female students engaged in two or more moderate to vigorous-intensive activities a week (Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, & Wall, 2010). Student involvement in extracurricular activities may enhance connectedness to their school which may have a positive impact on psychosocial outcomes and academic achievement (Akos, 2006). Fox et al. (2010) suggested that factors that connect the relationship between higher GPA and participation in team sports include eligibility requirements to play sports, additional academic tutoring opportunities for athletes, and differences in social norms for athletes regarding the importance of academic achievement. Furthermore, student connectedness to their school impacts and serves as an indicator of the success of the transition (Akos & Galassi, 2004a).

When comparing math and reading achievement levels of sixth grade students in a K-8 school to the 6-8 middle school model, the K-8 students performed at significantly higher levels (Byrnes & Ruby, 2007). Arcia (2007) found that of sixth graders enrolled in a K-8 school, 8.7% were suspended during their sixth grade year compared to 21.1% of middle school sixth graders. The consistency of higher suspension rates across the

factors studied, student demographics, behavior history and academic levels, indicates a strong setting effect (Arcia).

Booth, Sheehan, and Earley (2007) stated that middle school students were unable to raise their self-esteem during their sixth grade year which suggests that the environmental factors of a 6-8 middle school may not be as conducive for socio-emotional development as the K-8 model appears to be. Higher levels of negative attitudes toward their social behaviors were found in middle school students along with greater feelings of anonymity, especially among female middle school students (Booth et al., 2007). The traditional K-8 schools have several advantages that contribute to the higher levels of achievement, such as stronger community relations and traditions, smaller class sizes, lower student mobility rates during the year, and a higher percentage of certified teachers (Byrnes & Ruby, 2007).

Academic Factors and School Transition

There are many varying aspects of instructional strategies and approaches between elementary and middle school teachers. Some of these differences appear to have an impact on student motivation and academic achievement of sixth grade students during their transition into middle school. Differing grading policies and learning climates can lead to students struggling to adjust to their new teachers and classes. The factors associated with the academic theme of middle school transition include self-efficacy, student motivation, teaching approaches, and differences in grading policies between elementary and middle school teachers.

The differences in teaching practices between elementary and middle school teachers and the impact on student motivation and academic achievement have been

analyzed. The unique developmental characteristics of young adolescents include an emerging capacity for creative thinking, consideration of multiple ideas, and applying personal experiences to their learning process (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Friedel, Cortina, Turner, and Midgley (2010) summarized that previous empirical studies documented a decline in students' motivation and academic achievement in transition to higher grades and noted that differences in classroom and school environments experienced by students are a factor. Expectations regarding independent work, including homework, are greater in middle school along with higher levels of concentration in math classes (Schielack & Seeley, 2010). Because early adolescents learn more effectively through interactive activities and collaboration, teaching approaches should be directed toward the skills, abilities, and prior knowledge of each student (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Lau, Liem, and Nie (2008) noted that group work has a positive impact on deep learning as students exhibit mastery level learning by organizing their understanding, elaborating on their answers, and critically analyzing their ideas so they are understood by their peers.

Elementary school teachers indicated that their school goal structures are to have a higher mastery-theme structure compared to middle school teachers, who showed more of a performance-oriented learning culture (Haselhuhn, Al-Mabuk, Gabriele, Groen, & Galloway, 2007). Achievement goal orientations of students affected their academic task behaviors. Middle school policies, including ability grouping, recognizing excellent achievement, emphasis on high grades, and academic competition support a performance goal environment.

Haselhuhn et al. (2007) pointed out that students with mastery orientations, rather than performance goal orientations, are more likely to be more persistent even on difficult tasks, possess a higher academic self-efficacy (Friedel et al., 2010), and use more effective learning strategies. Friedel et al. (2010) found that students who perceive strong emphasis on mastery goals during transition experienced a significant increase in self-efficacy. Students who perceived teachers as promoting performance goals showed higher levels of problem behaviors and depression symptoms (Wang, 2009). Another study of achievement goals found that cooperative goal structures were more associated with both increased positive peer relationships and higher student achievement than were competitive or individualistic, mastery goal structures (Roseth et al., 2008). The learning climates of secondary schools result in a lack of motivational and supportive aspects for all students, except for the highest achieving students, as adolescents advance into middle and high school (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

The organizational structure and classroom environment that students are placed in should be examined regarding motivation and learning. If the design of the classroom is appropriate for the student's development level, declines in academic achievement and motivation can be avoided (Eccles et al., 1993). Classroom climates with positive student- teacher relationships showed lower probability of problem behaviors from students (Wang et al., 2010). The level of teacher emotional support as perceived by the student strongly impacted student behavior and depression levels (Wang, 2009).

Research indicates that when teachers provide students with opportunities to make decisions and solve problems independently in the classroom, students increase their self-confidence and competence when interacting with others (LaRusso et al., 2008). Wang

(2009) found that when adolescents feel less competition, academic comparison to peers, and emphasis on achieving high grades, but are encouraged to become independent thinkers and interact with their peers, students experience decreased depressive symptoms and exhibit less problem behaviors in class. Brackett et al. (2011) reported that fifth grade elementary classrooms were perceived by students to have a more positive emotional environment and students felt more connected to their teachers than sixth grade middle school classrooms and teachers. The emotional setting of a classroom is related to student motivation, interest, enjoyment, and engagement which all impact academic objectives and student achievement.

As teaching practices and classroom settings are considered in middle school, the impact of standardized testing and the pressures associated with NCLB must be analyzed. Musoleno and White (2010) reported that the pressure put on principals and teachers to meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) goals has influenced instructional time, teaching practices, and has shifted the focus away from cooperative learning approaches to increased strategies specific to achieving high test scores. Some schools have allotted additional instructional time during the school day specifically for tested subjects (reading, writing, and math) for remediation. In some cases, programs such as advisory and homeroom and special classes such as electives have been replaced for struggling students with additional instruction in those tested subjects. Bracey (2009) found a shift in instructional tendencies to incorporate more test-taking skills and implementation of practice tests and benchmark assessments in order to improve standardized test scores. Teachers reported significant increases in the use of teacher-directed instruction including drill and practice (Musoleno & White, 2010). This approach conflicts with the main

purpose of middle schools, which is to promote young adolescent development including thinking creatively, solving meaningful problems, and promoting higher order thinking capacities (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Moreover, Bracey (2009) noted that standardized tests are insensitive to instruction and teachers are influenced to alter teaching practices toward the test due to accountability pressures of test scores. Musoleno and White (2010) observed that the balanced and broad curriculum designed to promote all aspects of young adolescent development has been narrowed to specific standards in the tested subjects. Regarding the influence of test scores on teaching practices, Bracey (2009) maintained that "Schools under the gun to raise test scores increasingly rely on strategies that get immediate, but short-lived results" (p. 34). Middle schools face the challenges of balancing the pressures of high test scores and AYP while maintaining the middle school concept that promotes social and emotional growth for all individual students (Musoleno & White, 2010).

From a gender perspective, female students place a higher value on reading, read more at home, and possess higher self-concepts as readers than males (Kelley & Decker, 2009). Student motivation and overall value regarding reading decreases significantly for all students as they increase grade levels (Kelley & Decker, 2009). Research has shown significant differences of perceptions between students and teachers regarding struggles in reading for individual students (Bozack, 2011). There is a disconnection between the assessments of teachers and students regarding reading ability and effort, with boys overestimating their reading ability (Kelley & Decker, 2009; Bozack, 2011). Reading scores are related to student achievement across all content areas, and there was a positive relationship between achievement scores and motivation constructs (Bozack,

2011). As reading motivation decreased with higher grade levels, the number of students who scored on a proficient level on standardized reading tests decreased as grade levels increased (Kelley & Decker, 2009). Bozack (2011) emphasized the importance of working on increasing motivation for reading through the constructs of recognition, challenge, involvement, and reader identity.

When analyzing a perceived decline in student achievement during transition to middle school, differences in grading practices between elementary and middle school teachers may play a role. Bellmore (2011) explained that male and female students experience a decline in GPA when transitioning from elementary school into middle school. Randall and Engelhard (2008) reported that elementary teachers assigned higher grades overall than middle school teachers. The tendency of elementary teachers to assign higher grades increased significantly for students described as having low achievement levels. Elementary school teachers were less likely to assign failing grades to students regardless of their academic abilities compared to middle school teachers. Interestingly, teachers at both school levels consider student behavior when assigning grades, and well-behaved students appear to receive extra consideration for higher grades. Overall, middle school teachers tend to have more stringent grading policies than elementary teachers which may be a factor in the perceived decline in student achievement (Randall & Engelhard, 2008).

Chapter Summary

The transition into middle school is a pivotal time for all students. When analyzing transition needs using the person-environment fit theory developed by Eccles and Midgley (1989), it is clear that the middle school environment presents many

challenges for sixth grade students. An effective transition program must be in place and successfully implemented by school leaders in order to provide a positive and productive environment that allows students to flourish in their school surroundings.

The research identified various aspects of the academic, personal, and organizational issues concerning students across the middle school transition. Given that few studies, if any, have focused on the impact of elementary classroom structure on middle school transition, there is a void in the research. By analyzing sixth grade students' perceptions of their middle school transition experience based on their fifth grade classroom structure, much knowledge was gained regarding appropriate fifth grade classroom settings. Furthermore, studying the impact of elementary classroom structures on student behavior based on gender and socio-economic status of students further provided data regarding contextually appropriate classroom settings for fifth grade students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The transition into middle school brings a myriad of complex issues and opportunities for students. School leaders must have effective transition programs in place in both elementary and middle schools in order to promote a successful transition into middle school. Previous research has covered several aspects of team teaching and the three identified themes of middle school transition. The studies identified under the academic, personal and social, and organizational themes provided a wealth of information regarding stressors and issues that impact the academic achievement of students during their transition to middle school.

While various studies have been analyzed, few studies, if any, focused on the impact of the fifth grade classroom structure and its relationship to students' adjustment to the structure of middle school. The gap in the research may be due partly to more elementary schools recently implementing the team teaching setting in the fifth grade. While past research examined the relationship between student behavior and academic achievement, there is little research on the relationship between student behavior and elementary classroom structure specific to gender and socio-economic status of students.

As a middle school teacher, the researcher has seen many students enter middle school without the needed supports in place and witnessed sixth grade students struggle to adapt to their new climate. The varying classroom structures at feeder elementary schools can create a disadvantage for some sixth grade students who must adjust to the team teaching structure and the associate complexities in middle school. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between fifth grade classroom

setting (team teaching vs. self-contained) and sixth grade student behavior. The gender and the socio-economic status of transitioning students also served as variables of the study. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine middle school students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school based on elementary classroom structure.

Research Questions

The primary focus of this study centered on different organizational structures that adolescent students experience as they transition to middle school from elementary school. In particular, this study focused on the relationship between elementary classroom structure and middle school student behavior and perceptions during their transition experience. The following overarching question guided this study: What is the relationship between elementary classroom structure and practice and middle school students' perceptions and behavior? In addition, the following research questions were examined:

1. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and practice and middle school students' discipline referrals?
2. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and student disciplinary referrals based on gender and student socio-economic status?
3. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' personal and social perceptions?
4. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' organizational perceptions?

5. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' academic perceptions?

Research Design

This study was a non-experimental quantitative design using an anonymous survey. Quantitative research is a method which tests objective theories by determining relationships between variables. The variables are typically measured using instruments and statistical procedures to analyze the numbered data (Creswell, 2009). The quantitative method was appropriate for this study because the researcher: a) took an objective, detached stance toward the research participants; b) studied a sample that was representative of the population; c) used preconceived theories and concepts to determine what data was to be collected; d) used statistical methods to analyze data; and, e) used statistical inference procedures to generalize the findings from a sample to a defined population (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

Creswell (2009) defined the survey design as a "quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (p. 145). The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between fifth grade classroom setting (team teaching vs. self-contained) and sixth grade student behavior. The gender and the socio-economic status of transitioning students also served as variables of the study. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine middle school students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school based on elementary classroom structure.

The relationship between elementary classroom structure and student behavior was analyzed. The independent variables were fifth grade classroom structure (team teaching vs. self-contained), gender, and socio-economic status. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) defined a variable as a quantitative expression for a construct that can be measured in terms of scores on an instrument, and explained that the researcher thinks the independent variable occurred prior to and influenced the dependent variable. The dependent variable was discipline referrals. Another aspect of the study focused on students' perceptions of their middle school transition experience based on their fifth grade classroom structure, team teaching versus self contained. The independent variable was classroom structure (team teaching vs. self contained) and the dependent variables were personal/social, organizational, and academic constructs.

The Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002) was administered anonymously by the researcher to sixth grade students at Green Middle School (pseudonym) in order to determine if a relationship existed between students' perceptions of the middle school transition experience and fifth grade classroom structure. The method in which the survey was given was cross-sectional, meaning data was collected at one point in time (Creswell, 2009). Students were identified by their fifth grade classroom structure and the results from the data on their perceptions were organized into tables and discussed in the findings. Results from this study added suggestions to the current research regarding the relationship between fifth grade classroom structures and the transition into middle school.

Sample and Sampling

The study took place in Fuller County (pseudonym), which is located in the Southeastern region of the United States. Historically a farming community, Fuller County borders a metropolitan city in a neighboring state and experienced consistent population growth during the last decade. There were approximately 63,000 people living in the county and nearly 10,000 students attended Fuller County schools at the time of the study.

Demographically, roughly 40% of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch. The ethnic backgrounds of students consisted of over 90% White/Non-Hispanic and a small number of Hispanic American, African- American, dual race, and Asian American students. There were approximately 800 faculty members in the district with roughly 67% holding advanced degrees. There was a 15 to 1 student to teacher ratio in the school system. The average household income of Fuller County was approximately $48,000. Overall, Fuller County Schools could have been characterized as high-achieving with 95% of the third, fifth, and eighth grade students that met exceeded expectations in reading on the state's standardized test.

The participants in the study attended Green Middle School, which is centrally located to its three feeder elementary schools within the rural school district. Green Middle School contained a sixth through eighth grade configuration, and was designated as a Title I school at the time of the study. The demographics of Green Middle School were similar to Fuller County with student ethnic backgrounds consisting of approximately 90% White/Non-Hispanic and a small number of Hispanic American, African- American, dual race, and Asian American students. The socioeconomics of

Green Middle School showed that roughly 50% of students qualified for free and reduced lunch. There were approximately 50 teachers with nearly a 14 to 1 student to teacher ratio at Green Middle School.

Due to the influence of classroom organizational structures and other contextual components that may have impacted the student transition experience, additional information regarding the setting of Green Middle was appropriate. Green Middle utilized a team teaching model with two to four teachers per team covering the core subjects of math, language arts, science, and social studies. Students changed classes regularly and were expected to use their lockers and the restroom within a five minute period between classes. The connection classes consisted of art, band, chorus, computer science, and physical education. Students in grades 6 through 12 rode the same bus together based on the geographic location of each student's residence. Of three feeder elementary schools, one had a self-contained classroom structure for the fifth grade while the other two had a team teaching classroom structure.

The population consisted of 230 sixth grade students who attended the three feeder elementary schools with 117 being male (51%) and 113 female students (49%). There were 96 (42%) participants considered to be advantaged and 134 (58%) disadvantaged regarding their socio-economic status. By race, the student sample was comprised of over 90% White/Non-Hispanic students and a small number of Multiracial, African-American, Asian, and Hispanic students. The age of the participants ranged from ages 11 to 13 years.

There were two samples utilized in this study. The first sample consisted of the 230 sixth grade students at Green Middle School to analyze the relationship between

student discipline and elementary classroom structure, gender, and socioeconomic status. With the student data being archived, parent consent and student assent were not required and all 230 participants were included in the study. The second sample utilized the Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002) in order to analyze student perceptions of their transition and required parent consent and student assent in order to participate. There were 164 participants who returned the parent consent and student assent forms and took part in the study.

A convenience sampling technique was used to select participants for this study. In quantitative research, sampling refers to the process of selecting a sample from a defined population with the intent that the sample accurately represents the population (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The sample at Green Middle School was considered to be representative of the intended population by the researcher for three reasons. First, the sixth grade students at Green Middle School experienced both team teaching and self contained classroom structures during the fifth grade of elementary school. Second, the gender of the sample was equally represented, and approximately 50% of the sample qualified for free or reduced lunch. The balanced percentage of gender and socio-economic status of the sample appealed to the researcher. Third, Green Middle School had a team teaching structure, and the school climate of Green Middle was similar for all students as they transitioned into the sixth grade.

Instrumentation

The instrument that was used in this study was the School Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002). The questionnaire items were developed based on previous literature, stakeholder feedback and input, and transition programs (Akos, 2002). While

developing the instrument, Akos utilized a longitudinal method with open-ended questions and interviews with sixth grade students before, during, and after their transition into middle school. Guidance counselors who supervised transition programs at their respective schools recommended items for the instrument based on their experience and observations regarding student transition. Elementary and middle school teachers provided input regarding their observations of positive and negative factors associated with middle school transition.

The demographic data for the studies (Akos, 2002; Akos & Galassi, 2004) that were conducted using the Student Transition Questionnaire were similar to the researcher's current study. The studies took place in rural settings in the Southeastern region of the United States and the sample was majority Caucasian and the gender being appropriately even. During Akos' (2002) initial study, data were subjected to content analysis to identify emergent themes based upon the responses. Among the findings, students were most concerned with the following: being bullied by older students and making new friends (personal/social construct); getting lost in the building and following new rules and procedures (organizational construct); and, excessive homework and harder teachers (academic construct). A later study by Akos and Galassi (2004) found students were most concerned with the following: getting along with peers, making new friends, and dealing with bullies (personal/social construct); more difficult class work and increased homework (academic construct); and, being in a larger building and dealing with the complexities of multiple classes being taught by different teachers (organizational construct). Akos and Galassi "concluded that students appear to identify

three primary categories of school transition of academic, procedural, and social" (p. 218).

The Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002) was given in two previous studies in order to get an understanding of student perceptions of the transition experience from elementary school into middle school and it was determined that the survey items accurately measure the social/personal, organizational, and academic constructs associated with middle school transition. However, no psychometric testing had been conducted. With the author's permission, the researcher modified the survey to better address the population and school selected for this study. Any activities or programs that did not apply to Green Middle School on the original survey were omitted or amended and replaced with transitional activities and programs available for the current sixth graders. Appendix B depicts the changes made to the instrument in a chart format. With the author's permission, the researcher modified the survey to better address the population and school selected for this study. Any activities or programs on the original survey that did not apply to Green Middle School were omitted or amended and replaced with transitional activities and programs available for the current sixth graders. All survey items were aligned to previous research and an item analysis chart is shown in Appendix C. In order to further ensure construct validity of the instrument for this specific study, the researcher consulted with two elementary principals, three middle school principals, a middle school counselor, and five sixth teachers in Fuller County schools regarding the instrument items. The researcher received positive feedback that the items accurately measured the three constructs of personal/social, organizational, and academic variables (Appendix D).

The items on the questionnaire are low-risk in nature and were written using clear language and simple terms to ensure the sixth grade participants could understand the items. The initial question on the survey asks: What elementary school did you attend last year? By answering this question, the participant was identified as having either team teaching or self contained elementary classroom structure, which was the independent variable for this part of the study. The questionnaire contains 3 Likert items that asked the participants to compare items concerning the personal/social, organizational, and academic constructs. The analysis was conducted on each survey item and measured within the construct that the item addresses. Each construct of personal/social, organizational, and academic had a cumulative score from the Likert items on the survey.

The Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002) was created in SurveyMonkey^{tm} by the researcher. SurveyMonkey^{tm} is an online survey tool that allows researchers to construct a survey, have participants complete it online, and data is instantly compiled in the researcher's desired format while maintaining anonymity for participants. The results were then downloaded into a spreadsheet for further analysis. Creswell (2009) explained the strengths of the survey method being its reliability, efficiency, relative low cost, rapid data production, and overall convenience.

Data Collection

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study through Georgia Southern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), Fuller County's IRB, and the principal of Green Middle School. For the first part of the study focusing on discipline referrals, the researcher compiled a roster of sixth grade students at Green Middle School.

The students were listed alphabetically into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with the columns created for the following student data: classroom structure, gender, socio-economic status (SES), fifth grade fall semester discipline referrals (5^{th} DR), and sixth grade fall semester referrals (6^{th} DR). For classroom structure, each student was labeled either with (*T*) for team teaching or (*S*) for self-contained, depending on the feeder elementary school attended in fifth grade. All students who attended an elementary school other than the three feeder schools to Green Middle were deleted from the list and their data was not utilized for this study. The gender was identified with (*F*) for female and (*M*) for male. Students who qualified for free or reduced lunch status during their fifth or sixth grade school year had the letter (*D*) under socio-economic status. Students who did not qualify for free or reduced lunch status were designated as (*A*). The researcher compiled all discipline referrals for the fall semester of each student's fifth and sixth grade academic years. The researcher utilized Green Middle School's computer information system to collect student information concerning classroom structure (elementary school), gender, and discipline referrals. The information regarding students who received free or reduced lunch was obtained through the county's food services director. Once the student data collection was completed, the researcher removed the first column of the Data Collection Chart and the students' names were locked and stored in a safe in the researcher's home office. The column labeled "Student I.D." was used to protect the identity of each student. Once the data analysis was completed, the Data Collection Chart was locked and stored in a separate safe in the researcher's home office. No identifiers were stored with the data. The data will be stored for a minimum of 7 years from completion of the study per the GSU Board of Regents retention policy.

For second aspect of the study focusing on the perceptions of the middle school experience based on fifth grade classroom structure, the Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002), an anonymous survey, was utilized. With the study involving minors, the researcher was careful to follow the proper IRB guidelines in order to protect the participants involved in the study. After conferring with the school principal regarding the most appropriate time and place for the sixth grade teachers and students, the researcher met with the sixth grade students and discussed the purpose of the study. Following a brief introduction, the researcher informed all sixth grade students that participation in the survey was voluntary and that all results were anonymous. The researcher explained the meaning of voluntary and anonymous in order to avoid confusion or misinterpretation of the terms by the participants. Parental consent forms and student assent forms were given to the students by the researcher. The researcher explained that assent forms were for students to sign who chose to participate in the survey and consent forms had to be signed by a parent or guardian and returned in order to participate in the survey. The students were asked to return the signed assent and consent form to their homeroom teacher within a week. A sixth grade teacher was asked to collect the forms over the next week and to encourage the students to return the forms. The researcher left several extra copies of the assent and consent forms with each sixth grade team. The researcher stayed in close contact with the teacher volunteer and collected the forms daily as they were returned. The researcher tabulated each student as a participant as they return signed assent and consent forms.

Once the returned number of assent and consent forms for each participant in a classroom reached 60%, the researcher set up a time with that classroom teacher to take

the entire class to the computer lab. Before going to the computer lab, each student was instructed to bring a reading book with them. All students at Green Middle School were expected to have a book for pleasure reading in language arts class as a part of the school's literacy program. The researcher informed the class that students who did not participate in the survey had the option of reading their book at their computer desk or to visit Study Island on their computer. All students at Green Middle School had a personal account for Study Island and had access to various educational activities on the program. The researcher walked all students from the classroom to the computer lab.

The computers were numbered one through 35 in Green Middle School's computer lab. Using the class roster, the students were placed alphabetically on the computers, starting with the first student on the class roster being placed at computer number one. The researcher had the appropriate website (SurveyMonkey^{tm} for the participants; Study Island for non-participants) on each computer in order to protect the anonymity of participants taking the survey. The anonymous survey took each participant approximately 20 minutes to complete but ample time was be given for all participants to complete their answers. Once all participants had completed their anonymous survey, the researcher led the students back to their classroom.

Once the surveys were completed by all eligible sixth grade participants, the researcher verified the response rate of the participants to confirm that the needed number, 144, was satisfied in order to appropriately represent the intended population (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). There were 164 participants who completed the survey and the required number of participants was reached to secure a successful confidence interval for the sample size. With the data from the survey stored in SurveyMonkey^{tm},

the researcher then downloaded all results into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet until the data analysis process was conducted.

Data Analysis

The first aspect of this study focused on the relationship between the number of discipline referrals (independent variable) and the dependent variables of elementary classroom structure, gender, and student socio-economic status. The researcher transferred all student data from the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0. SPSS is computer software which has various programs that can manage, analyze, and display statistical data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Once student data was entered into SSPS, it was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The data was summarized in the form of frequencies, means, and standard deviations. A three-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to investigate classroom structure, gender, and socio-economic status on student discipline referrals (See Table 3). Two dependent variables were used: 5^{th} and 6^{th} grade discipline referrals. The independent variables were classroom structure, gender, and socio-economic status. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) stated that an MANOVA "is a statistical procedure is a technique for determining whether groups differ on more than one dependent variable" (p. 321). A MANOVA is appropriate when there are two or more dependent variables. If a significant MANOVA *F* value is obtained, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) can then be conducted on each dependent variable. The intention of the ANOVA is to determine which of the measured variables produced a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the groups being analyzed (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

The second aspect of the study examined student perceptions of the middle school transition experience based on two different fifth grade classroom structures, team teaching or self-contained. The independent variable was elementary classroom structure and the dependent variables were the personal/social, organizational, and academic constructs of middle school transition. For the survey data to be analyzed, data were transferred from a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet into SPSS 19.0. Due to the multiple response choices of items 2, 3, 8, and 9, the checklist items were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency, mean, range, and standard deviation. A one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to investigate 5th grade classroom structure on student perceptions of the transition. Three dependent variables were used: Personal/Social, Organizational, and Academic, corresponding to the three constructs on the Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002). The independent variable was 5th grade classroom structure.

The data were reported using tables to show the relationship between discipline referrals and the three variables of elementary classroom structure, gender, and socioeconomic status for the first part of the study. Tables were also used to show the relationship between elementary classroom structure of students and their middle school transition based on the personal/social, organizational, and academic constructs. All data and tables were explained in the narrative format.

Chapter Summary

This study was a non-experimental quantitative design using an anonymous survey. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between fifth grade classroom setting (team teaching vs. self-contained) and sixth grade student behavior.

The gender and the socio-economic status of transition students also served as variables of the study. A secondary purpose of the study examined middle school students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school. The study was conducted in a small, rural school district in the Southeastern region of the United States. The two samples of this study consisted of 230 and 164 sixth grade students from Green Middle School.

Akos' Student Transition Questionnaire was administered to sixth grade students at Green Middle School anonymously in order to compare student perceptions of the middle school transition experience based on two different fifth grade classroom structures, team teaching or self contained. The data was reported using tables to show the relationship between discipline referrals and the three variables of elementary classroom structure, gender, and socioeconomic status for the first part of the study. Tables were also used to show the comparison between elementary classroom structure of students and their middle school transition based on the personal/social, organizational, and academic constructs. All data and tables were explained in the narrative format. This study intended to add suggestions to the current research regarding fifth grade classroom structures and its impact on the transition into middle school.

CHAPTER 4

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

As students transition into middle school, it is critical that they are well-prepared to address the upcoming challenges. Fortunately, many students experience a smooth transition into middle school and are successful in adapting to their new surroundings. However, some students struggle with the social and personal, organizational, and academic changes associated with moving into middle school. For many sixth grade students, the middle school transition can be full of anxiety and stress as they adjust to their new surroundings. By analyzing the impact of elementary classroom structure on student behavior and students' perceptions of their transition experience, school leaders may be better informed and, thus, better able to create positive learning environments for fifth grade students which will promote a successful transition to middle school with respect to student discipline and the personal and social, organizational, and academic aspects of the transition experience.

By using the person-environment fit theory as a guide for this study, the researcher analyzed the relationship between fifth grade classroom structure (team teaching and self-contained) and student behavior, accounting for gender and socio-economic status of each student. Using the Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002), the study gave insight into student perceptions of their transition experience, and the data may allow school administrators to better understand the process of middle school transition and the many facets that affect each student. The researcher hoped to

fill the gap in the research concerning elementary classroom structures and the impact on student transition into middle school.

This chapter presents an overview of the research questions and the design of the study. Additional demographic information is provided about study respondents. The findings are explained in narrative form and organized into tables; descriptive statistics are organized under each designated research question. The headings of the major elements of this chapter are divided into the following sections: (a) Research Questions; (b) Research Design; (c) Respondents; (d) Findings; (e) Response to Research Questions; and, (f) Summary.

Research Questions

The primary focus of this study centered on different organizational structures that adolescent students experience as they transition to middle school from elementary school. In particular, this study focused on the relationship between elementary classroom structure and middle school student behavior and perceptions during their transition experience. The following overarching question guided this study: What is the relationship between elementary classroom structure and practice and middle school students' perceptions and behavior? In addition, the following research questions were examined:

1. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and practice and middle school students' discipline referrals?
2. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and student disciplinary referrals based on gender and student socio-economic status?

3. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' personal and social perceptions?
4. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' organizational perceptions?
5. What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' academic perceptions?

Research Design

This study was a non-experimental quantitative design using an anonymous survey. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between fifth grade classroom setting (team teaching vs. self-contained) and sixth grade student behavior. Gender and socio-economic status of transitioning students also served as study variables. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine middle school students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school. The study was conducted in a small, rural school district in the Southeastern region of the United States. The two samples of this study consisted of 230 and 164 sixth grade students from Green Middle School.

The Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002) was administered anonymously to sixth grade students at Green Middle School in order to compare student perceptions of the middle school transition experience based on two different fifth grade classroom structures, team teaching and self-contained. Data are reported using tables to show the relationship between discipline referrals and the three variables of elementary classroom structure, gender, and socioeconomic status. Tables are also used to compare

the elementary classroom structure of students and their middle school transition based on the academic/personal, organizational, and academic constructs. All data and tables are explained in the narrative format. This study was intended to add suggestions to the current research regarding fifth grade classroom structure and its impact on the transition into middle school.

Description of Respondents

In order to protect the identity of the selected school district and middle school in this study, pseudonyms were used. The population of this study consisted of sixth grade students at Green Middle School, located in a rural school district in the Southeastern region of the United States. The participants experienced different fifth grade classroom structures (team teaching vs. self-contained) and had transitioned into a team teaching structure in sixth grade. The population consisted of 230 sixth grade students who attended three feeder elementary schools.

There were two samples utilized in this study. The first sample consisted of the 230 sixth grade students at Green Middle School to analyze the relationship between student discipline and elementary classroom structure, gender, and socioeconomic status. With the student data being archived, parent consent and student assent were not required and all 230 participants were included in the study. The second sample utilized the Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002) in order to analyze student perceptions of their transition and required parent consent and student assent in order to participate. Of the 230 sixth grade students who transitioned from the three feeder elementary schools, 164 students returned signed parental consent and student assent forms. The overall response rate of the eligible sixth grade students who participated in the Student

Transition Questionnaire was 71%. Of the 164 participants in the study, 64 (39.0%) experienced a self-contained elementary classroom structure and 100 (61%) experienced a team teaching elementary classroom structure. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey and the importance of protecting each participant's identity and personal information, no other demographic data was identified for participants who completed the Student Transition Questionnaire.

Findings

A one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to investigate the effect of fifth grade classroom structure on students' perceptions of their transition to sixth grade (Table 1). Three dependent variables were used: Personal and Social, Organizational, and Academic, corresponding to the three constructs on the Student Transition Questionnaire. The independent variable was fifth grade classroom structure. A Wilks' Lambda was used to determine if there was significance among means which showed a value of 0.98. A Wilks' Lambda value of 1 indicates the means are equal. Therefore, the calculated Wilks' Lambda of .98 represents a slight variation to equal means.

The *F* ratio was calculated to be .95 for the MANOVA. An *F* ratio is the ratio of between-groups variance to within-groups variance (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Further analysis showed that the probability of the responses being attributed to chance is 42 out of 100 ($p = .42$) or a 42% chance. There was no statistically significant difference between self-contained and team teaching classroom structure on the combined dependent variables, F (3, 159) = .95, $p > .05$, Wilks' Lambda = .98.

Table 1

Multivariate Test

Effect	Λ	*F*	df_1	df_2	*p*
Classroom Structure	0.98	.95	3	159	0.42

*p < .05

In order to effectively analyze the data, the findings for each survey item from the Student Transition Questionnaire have been organized into tables (Appendix E). Each table shows the question, answer choices, percentages, and totals of the respondents for each classroom structure. Among the findings, question 4 asked, "How was the move from elementary school to middle school for you?" The findings were similar for both classroom structures with most participants choosing *Easy* or *Very Easy* (self-contained 89.0%, N = 57; team teaching 92.0%, N = 92), indicating the majority of participants experienced a positive transition into middle school.

A three-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate classroom structure, gender, and socio-economic status on student discipline referrals (Table 2). The two dependent variables were fifth and sixth grade discipline referrals. The independent variables were classroom structure, gender, and socio-economic status. There were statistically significant differences among classroom structure, gender, and socio-economic status on the combined dependent variables. For classroom structure, a Wilks' Lambda was used to determine if there was significance among means which showed a value of 0.96. A Wilks' Lambda value of 1 indicates the means are equal. Therefore, this analysis shows a difference in means.

The *F* ratio was calculated to be 4.10 for the MANOVA. Further analysis showed that the probability of the responses being attributed to chance is 2 in 100 (p = .02) or a 2% chance. Additionally, the partial eta squared value is .04. The partial eta squared value ranges are .1 being small, .6 considered medium, and 1.4 being large. Looking at gender, a Wilks' Lambda value of .93 was found, indicating a difference among the means. The MANOVA produced an *F* ratio of 8.33, revealing that the variability between the groups is 8.33 times greater than the variability. Further analysis showed the *p* value to be .03 and partial eta squared to be .07. The third independent variable of socio-economic status showed a Wilks' Lambda of .95 and an *F* 5.97. Further analysis found a *p* value of .00, indicating a 0% probability of the responses being attributed to chance. Additionally, the partial eta squared value is .05.

Table 2

Multivariate Test

Effect	Λ	*F*	df_1	df_2	*p*	$\eta 2$
CS	.96	4.10*	2	221	.02	.04
Gender	.93	8.33*	2	221	.00	.07
S.E.S	.95	5.97*	2	221	.00	.05

*p < .05

With statistical significance being reached, further analysis of the variables was performed to determine which independent variables differed. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) for each dependent variable was performed to provide this information (Table 3). The results for the dependent variables were then considered separately using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .025. The Bonferroni adjustment of the alpha level

was set at .025 to reduce type 1 errors that can be generated by repeated ANOVA tests. The differences to reach statistical significance were classroom structure for sixth grade discipline referrals (F = 7.35), gender for fifth grade discipline referrals (F = 16.37), gender for sixth grade discipline referrals (F = 5.92), socio-economic status for fifth grade discipline referrals (F = 5.95), and socio-economic status for sixth grade discipline referrals (F = 11.00).

Table 3

Test of Between Subjects Effects

DV		*MS*	*F*	df_1	df_2	*p*	n^2
5th D.R.	CS	.22	.19	1	222	.66	.001
	Gender	18.25	16.37*	1	222	.00	.07
	SES	6.64	5.96*	1	222	.02	.03
6th D.R.	CS	18.34	7.35*	1	222	.00	.03
	Gender	14.78	5.92	1	222	.02	.03
	SES	27.47	11.00	1	222	.00	.05

*p < .025

The descriptive statistics from the three-way between-groups MANOVA are shown in Table 4. The discipline referrals (D.R.) for classroom structure (S = self-contained; T = team teaching), gender (F = female; M = male), and socio-economic status (A = Advantaged; D = Disadvantaged) in Table 4 are separated by the fifth and sixth grade school year.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Three-Way MANOVA

	C.S.	G	S.E.S.	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
5th D.R.	S	F	A	.11	.315	19
			D	.25	.447	16
			Total	.17	.382	35
		M	A	.39	.988	23
			D	1.47	2.167	15
			Total	.82	1.625	38
		Total	A	.26	.767	42
			D	.84	1.635	31
			Total	.51	1.237	73
	T	F	A	.15	.464	26
			D	.33	.617	52
			Total	.27	.574	78
		M	A	.68	1.278	28
			D	.78	1.316	51
			Total	.75	1.296	79
		Total	A	.43	1.002	54
			D	.55	1.045	103
			Total	.51	1.029	157
	Total	F	A	.13	.405	45
			D	.31	.580	68
			Total	.24	.522	113
		M	A	.55	1.154	51
			D	.94	1.558	66
			Total	.77	1.404	117
		Total	A	.35	.906	96
			D	.62	1.206	134
			Total	.51	1.097	230

	C.S.	G	S.E.S.	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
6th D.R	S	F	A	.21	.535	19
			D	.88	1.258	16
			Total	.51	.981	35
		M	A	.35	.885	23
			D	2.40	5.082	15
			Total	1.16	3.357	38
		Total	A	.29	.742	42
			D	1.61	3.667	31
			Total	.85	2.520	73
	T	F	A	.08	.272	26
			D	.31	.729	52
			Total	.23	.623	78
		M	A	.43	1.136	28
			D	.53	1.286	51
			Total	.49	1.229	79
		Total	A	.26	.851	54
			D	.42	1.043	103
			Total	.36	.982	157
	Total	F	A	.13	.405	45
			D	.44	.904	68
			Total	.32	.759	113
		M	A	.39	1.021	51
			D	.95	2.731	66
			Total	.71	2.170	117
		Total	A	.27	.801	96
			D	.69	2.031	134
			Total	.52	1.645	230

Response to Research Questions

The overarching question for this study was: What is the relationship between elementary classroom structure and practice and middle school students' perceptions and behavior? The five research questions addressed specific aspects of elementary classroom structure and its relationship between discipline referrals and student perceptions.

Classroom Structure and Discipline Referrals.

The initial research question asked: What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and practice and middle school students' discipline referrals? Based on the findings of an *F* value of 7.35 from the ANOVA procedure, there were statistically significant differences found for sixth grade discipline referrals based on fifth grade classroom structure. Students in the self-contained classroom structure (M = .85) received discipline referrals in sixth grade at significantly higher rates than students from the team teaching structure (M = .36). Although not statistically significant, a further inspection of the mean scores indicated that participants from the team teaching classroom structure received fewer discipline referrals in sixth grade compared to fifth grade. In sum, participants from the self-contained classroom structure received higher rates of discipline referrals than team teaching participants in sixth grade regardless of gender and socioeconomic status (Table 4).

Classroom Structure and Student Disciplinary Referrals based on Gender and Student Socio-Economic Status.

The second research question asked: What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and student disciplinary referrals based on gender and student

socio-economic status? There were statistically significant findings for males and socio-economically disadvantaged students according to the MANOVA procedure. The differences that reached statistical significance were gender for fifth grade discipline referrals, gender for sixth grade discipline referrals, socio-economic status for fifth grade discipline referrals, and socio-economic status for sixth grade discipline referrals. Focusing on gender, males (M = .71) received more sixth grade discipline referrals than females (M = .32). Males (M = 1.16) and females (M = .51) from the self-contained structure received more discipline referrals than males (M = .49) and females (M = .23) from the team teaching classroom structure. Although not statistically significant, a further inspection of the mean scores indicated that males and females in the team teaching classroom structure received fewer discipline referrals in sixth grade compared to fifth grade. When looking at fifth grade discipline referrals, significance was found within the mean scores, indicating that males (*M* = .82, *SD* = 1.63) in a self-contained classroom structure had a greater number of fifth grade discipline referrals than females (*M* = .17, *SD* =.38). The same held true for the team teaching classroom structure (*M* =.75, *SD* = 1.30) for males and (*M* =.27, *SD* =.57) for females. In sum, males had increased numbers of discipline referrals than females in all statistical categories including grade level, socioeconomic status, and classroom structure (Table 4).

Further inspection of the mean scores indicated that participants who were *disadvantaged* received significantly higher discipline referrals in fifth and sixth grade than *advantaged* participants. *Disadvantaged* (M = .69) students doubled the average of discipline referrals in sixth grade compared to *advantaged* (M = .27). In sixth grade, *Disadvantaged* females (M = .44) indicated higher rates of referrals than *advantaged*

females (M = .13). Males who were *disadvantaged* (M = .95) were twice as likely to receive a discipline referral as an *advantaged* male (M = .39) in sixth grade. Although not all findings reached significance, disadvantaged participants had higher rates of discipline referrals than advantaged participants in all statistical categories including grade level, gender, and classroom structure (Table 4).

Classroom Structure and Personal and Social Perceptions.

The third research question asked: What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' personal and social perceptions? Based on the MANOVA results (p = .42), there was no statistically significant difference between the personal and social perceptions of middle school students from self-contained and team teaching classroom structures. However, based on the results from the Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002), there were differences in student responses between the two classroom structures (Appendix E).

When asked about items that made them happy when entering middle school, 78.1% (N = 50) of participants from self-contained classrooms and 71.0% (N = 71) of participants from team teaching classrooms selected *More Freedom,* indicating that individual freedom was a priority for both groups. Additionally, *Attending School Events* was chosen by 70.3% (N = 45) of students from self-contained classrooms and 50.0% (N = 50) of students from team teaching classrooms, showing a 20.3% difference in the classroom structures. Of the students from self-contained classrooms, 21.9% (N = 14) and 10.0% (N = 10) of students from team teaching classrooms were looking forward to *Older Students* during their transition to middle school.

While responding to a question asking about the things that worry them about middle school, 32.8% (N = 21) of students from self-contained classrooms and 13.0% (N = 13) of students from team teaching classrooms selected *Being Bullied*; 19.8% higher for self-contained classroom participants compared to team teaching classroom participants.

When asked if teachers care about students at the middle school level, 11.0% (N = 7) of students from self-contained classrooms selected *Disagree* and/or *Strongly Disagree*, compared to 5.0% (N = 5) of the students from team teaching classrooms.

Classroom Structure and Organizational Perceptions.

The fourth research question asked: What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' organizational perceptions? Based on the MANOVA results (p = .42), there was no statistically significant difference between the personal and social perceptions of middle school students from self-contained and team teaching classroom structures. However, based on the results from the Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002), there were differences among responses between the two classroom structures. Both groups of participants indicated they are happy to *Using a Locker*, with 82.8% (N = 53) of students from self-contained classrooms and 82.0% (N = 82) of students from team teaching classrooms selecting this item, indicating a strong preference for this new found freedom for a majority of participants (See Appendix E).

There was a 25.5% difference regarding participants being happy about *Changing Classes* (self-contained 62.5%, N = 40; team teaching 37.0%, N = 37), which suggested that participants who did not change classes in fifth grade were more excited than participants who had already changed classes. Regarding the choice of *Participating in*

Sports and Clubs, students from self-contained classrooms showed a 64.1% (N = 41) rate compared to the rate of students from team teaching classrooms (47.0%, N = 47).

After experiencing one teacher for their core classes in fifth grade, 54.7% (N = 35) of the self-contained classroom participants were happy about *Having New Teachers* in middle school compared to 41.0% (N = 41) of participants from the team teaching classrooms. Additionally, 51.6% (N = 33) of students from self-contained classrooms were concerned with *Getting to Class on Time* compared to 32.0% (N = 32) of students from team teaching classrooms, a 19.6% difference in the two groups.

Data analysis showed 46.9% (N = 30) of the self-contained classroom participants were worried about *New Rules and Expectations*, whereas 32.0% (32) of team teaching participants showed concerned about this item. According to the findings, 13.5% more participants from self-contained classrooms (37.5%, N = 24) were worried about *Being Unorganized and Losing My Work* compared to those from team teaching classrooms (24.0%, N = 24). The majority of both groups of participants were worried about *Finding Their Way Around or Getting Lost* (self-contained 64.1%, N = 41; team teaching 54.0%, N = 54) in their new school building (See Appendix E).

Classroom Structure and Academic Perceptions.

The final research question inquired: What is the relationship between elementary school classroom structure and middle school students' academic perceptions? Based on the MANOVA results (p = .42), there was no statistically significant difference between the personal and social perceptions of middle school students from self-contained and team teaching classroom structures. However, based on the results from the Student Transition Questionnaire (Akos, 2002), there were

differences among responses between the two classroom structures. Data analysis for *Getting Good Grades* revealed that 62.5% (N = 40) of students from self-contained classrooms and 44.0% (N = 44) of students from team teaching classrooms were happy about making good grades, an 18.5% difference (See Appendix E).

Connection classes at Green Middle School consisted of art, band, chorus, computer science, and physical education. Regarding being happy about *Taking Connection Classes* in sixth grade, the response from students from self-contained classrooms was 85.9% (N = 55) compared to 62.0% (N = 62) from students from team teaching classrooms. Additionally, students from team teaching classrooms (48.0%, N = 48) were more worried about having *Harder Classes than Fifth Grade* than students from self-contained classrooms (40.6%, N = 26). After experiencing the same teacher all year in fifth grade, students from self-contained classrooms (54.7%; N = 35) showed a 14.7% increase in the rate of being worried about *Hard or Unfriendly Teachers* in sixth grade compared to students from team teaching classrooms (42.0%; N = 42) who had two or more teachers in fifth grade.

Regarding how helpful elementary school teachers and counselors were during their transition to middle school, 51.5% (N = 33) of students from self-contained classrooms chose *Helpful* or *Very Helpful* compared to responses from students from team teaching classrooms (44.0%, N = 44). When asked about the helpfulness of sixth grade teachers during the transition into middle school, students from team teaching classrooms (77.0%, N = 77) indicated higher percentages of *Helpful* and *Very Helpful* selections compared to students from self-contained classrooms (73.5%, N = 47).

Summary

The participants in this study included sixth grade students at Green Middle School, a rural school located in the Southeastern region of the United States. The sample included 230 participants who attended three feeder elementary schools to Green Middle School. Discipline referrals for the first semesters of the fifth and sixth grades were compiled and a three-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate the relationship between classroom structure, gender, and socio-economic status and discipline referrals. Significant statistical findings were found regarding gender, socio-economic status, and sixth grade classroom structure.

A one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate the relationship between elementary classroom structure and student perception during the middle school transition. The dependent variables used were the social and personal, organizational, and academic constructs which were aligned to the Student Transition Questionnaire. Of the 164 participants who took the survey, 64 (39.0%) experienced a self-contained elementary classroom structure and 100 (61%) experienced a team teaching elementary classroom structure. With the independent variable being elementary classroom structure, there were no statically significant differences found between the self-contained and team teaching classroom structures on the three dependent variables.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

For students making the transition into middle school, progress and success during the sixth grade year varies as much as the personalities and behaviors of individual students. As young people enter puberty, growth and development are more rapid during this period than any other developmental stage other than infancy (Carnegie, 1989). With adolescent cognitive growth occurring continuously, middle school students require multiple forms of instruction and experiential learning in order to fully develop (NMSA, 2010). However, many middle school students have shown declines in academic achievement and motivation while developing negative perceptions toward their school environment (Jackson & Davis, 2000). When analyzing transition needs using the person-environment fit theory developed by Eccles and Midgley (1989), it is clear that the middle school environment presents many challenges for sixth grade students.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between fifth grade classroom setting (team teaching vs. self-contained) and sixth grade student behavior. The gender and socio-economic status of transitioning students also served as variables of the study. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine middle school students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school based on elementary classroom structure. Through the use of the *Student Transition Questionnaire* (Akos, 2002), sixth grade participants from both elementary classroom structures gave their perspectives of the personal and social, organizational, and academic constructs associated with their transition into middle school.

Archival data about the 230 sixth grade students at Green Middle School who attended the three traditional feeder elementary schools was gathered. Utilizing the Data Collection Instrument, student information concerning elementary classroom structure, discipline referrals, gender, and socio-economic status was compiled. A three-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted utilizing SPSS 19.0 to determine if statistically significant data were found. The survey method was utilized to find data about the relationship between elementary classroom structure and student perceptions of their middle school transition experience. The Student Transition Questionnaire was given anonymously to 164 students who returned signed parental consent and student assent forms. The overall response rate of the eligible sixth grade students who participated in the Student Transition Questionnaire was 71%. A one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to investigate the effect of fifth grade classroom structure on student perceptions of the transition. All data were organized into tables and presented in narrative form.

Analysis of Findings

Many middle school students have shown declines in academic achievement and motivation following their transition into middle school while developing negative perceptions toward their school environment (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Results from this study regarding student perceptions of middle school contradict this finding, with 92% of students from team teaching classrooms and 89% of students from self-contained classrooms indicating they experienced a positive transition into middle school. Additionally, when asked if they were happy at their new middle school, 90% of students from team teaching classrooms and 81.2% of students from self-contained classrooms

answered *Agree* or *Strongly agree*. Overall, students from both elementary classroom structures experienced a successful transition into middle school. The findings from this study are encouraging as research shows that adolescents' positive perceptions of school climate are both directly and indirectly related to fewer behavioral problems, including substance abuse and bullying (LaRusso, Romer, & Selman, 2008). The positive student ratings of their middle school transition experience in this study may be attributed to the effective transition program currently implemented at Green Middle School and consistent communication between Green Middle and its three feeder elementary schools.

The findings were found to be mixed regarding the relationship of elementary classroom structure and student perceptions and discipline. For example, there were no significant differences in student perceptions of their transition experience based on their elementary classroom structure. However, significant data were found regarding discipline referrals in sixth grade, showing a clear correlation with elementary classroom structure as well as student gender and socio-economic status. Specifically, males, economically disadvantaged students, and students who experienced a self-contained elementary classroom showed increased discipline referrals during the transition year into middle school. The following section includes a discussion of the results organized under the five research questions of this study and how the findings from this study contribute to the data found in previous studies.

Classroom Structure and Discipline Referrals.

Students in the self-contained classroom structure received significantly higher numbers of discipline referrals during their transition to middle school compared to students from the team teaching structure. While there is little to no known data

regarding classroom structure and discipline referrals during the transition to middle school, the researcher assumes that the struggles of students from self-contained classrooms to adjust to a new teaching structure resulted in increased discipline referrals. Conversely, students who experienced team teaching in fifth grade were exposed to changing classes and multiple teachers before entering middle school, creating an advantage for those students and promoting a smoother transition experience. Effective team teaching entails interdisciplinary planning between teachers which allows for collaboration regarding the academic and behavioral issues of individual students (Cook & Faulkner, 2010). While not significant, both males and females who were exposed to the team teaching classroom structure experienced a slight decrease in discipline referrals during their transition to middle school. Meanwhile, both males and females from self-contained classrooms experienced increased discipline referrals during the sixth grade.

When considering the significance in the increase of discipline referrals for self-contained students in this study, one must consider the theoretical framework utilized and the impact of the person environment fit (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). The transition to middle school will entail many challenges for all students but due to being limited to a single teacher in the same classroom during the majority in fifth grade, self-contained students may be less prepared for middle school than their team teaching peers. The person environment fit (Eccles & Midgley, 1989) identified several normative changes that occur in middle school that create a negative fit in relation to the adolescent development needs, including larger class sizes, tougher discipline policies, and less intimate teacher-student relationships compared to elementary school. The researcher concludes that self-contained students are not prepared to change classes, struggle in

adjusting to many multiple teachers throughout the day, and they struggle to handle the organizational challenges associated with team teaching. The lack of preparation of the self-contained students toward these aspects of team teaching have a significant impact on student behavior which, consequently, result in increased discipline referrals in sixth grade.

Classroom Structure and Student Disciplinary Referrals based on Gender and Student Socio-Economic Status.

Males were found to have a significantly higher number of discipline referrals regardless of classroom structure or socio-economic status. This finding supports an abundance of research analyzing student demographics and discipline referrals that show increased discipline referrals involving males (Algozzine et al., 2008; Rusby et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2010). Interestingly, males from the self-contained classroom structure showed a mean score of 1.16, while males from the team teaching classroom had a .49 score, indicating that males from self-contained classrooms had more than double the number of discipline referrals per student than males from team teaching classrooms.

The findings from this study indicated that students having a disadvantaged socio-economic status were found to have a significantly higher number of discipline referrals compared to high-SES students. These findings support previous research that showed the number of discipline referrals after the transition from elementary to middle school increased significantly for low-SES students compared to high-SES students (Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Theriot & Dupper, 2010). Additionally, this study indicated that low-SES students were found to have higher discipline referrals regardless of gender or elementary classroom structure. Students with increased discipline referrals achieve

lower scores regarding student achievement compared to students with fewer discipline referrals (Freiberg, Huzinec, & Templeton, 2009). The person environment fit theory (Eccles & Midgley, 1989) explained that many environmental factors outside of school, including the amount of parental support and the resources provided by adults and older siblings at home, greatly impact the developmental needs of adolescents. Based on previous research and the findings from this study, low-SES students have a higher likelihood of being at risk for discipline referrals which may affect their academic achievement and overall success in school. Students identified as at-risk are more likely to experience academic and behavioral problems including low test scores, increased retention rates, increased discipline referrals, and higher dropout rates (Hickman et. al., 2008).

Classroom Structure and Personal and Social Perceptions.

While there were no statistically significant differences between the two classroom structures and personal and social perceptions, the data yielded discussion points regarding social and personal issues of transitioning students. When asked about items that made each student happy about entering middle school, *more freedom* was selected by 78.1% of the participants from self-contained classrooms and 71.0% of participants from team teaching classrooms. This finding supports the belief that, upon entering middle school, for the first time in their lives adolescents are given the opportunity to create their own identity, progress into new social roles, and develop their own code of ethics to guide their behavior (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Eccles and Midgley (1989) explained that as a part of their person-environment fit theory, an essential need for adolescents is continuity of classmates throughout the school

day to promote positive friendship and social bonding with their peers. Students in this study from both classroom structures strongly indicated they were happy about making new friends. This data relates to the finding that adolescents who were socially competent displayed positive attitudes toward school and adjusted to new experiences and surroundings more effectively than students with lower levels of social competence (Prelow et al., 2007).

Due to the potential consequences and the harmful impact of bullying within schools, a heightened awareness of potential bullying issues is essential in schools at all levels. Students who experience bullying, both victims and the perpetrators, are more likely to engage in aggressive behavior such as carrying weapons and performing acts of violence than students who do not experience bullying (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008). When asked what things about moving on to the middle school they were worried about, 32.8% (N=21) of students from self-contained classrooms and 13.0% (N=13) of students from team teaching classrooms selected *being bullied*, which was 19.8% higher for students from self-contained classrooms compared to students in team teaching classrooms. Students with bullying experiences show higher rates of skipping school and missing classes (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008). The person environment fit theory (Eccles & Midgley, 1989) identified that adolescents experiencing puberty develop insecurities regarding self-perception and may be vulnerable toward peer comparison. The data from this study that indicates self-contained students having an increased level of anxiety of being bullied in sixth grade is cause for concern for school leaders. Middle schools must have a comprehensive transition program that stresses the importance of

treating others with respect and focuses on the behaviors that are considered to be bullying.

Classroom Structure and Organizational Perceptions.

While there were no significant findings, data from this study indicated that students from both classroom structures were looking forward to using a locker in sixth grade. Students from self-contained classrooms indicated higher levels of happiness regarding changing classes and having new teachers compared to students from team teaching classrooms. This finding was found to be encouraging as the literature has shown that during the transition into middle school, many students find their new surroundings less supportive than elementary school and often experience losses in self-esteem and student achievement (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Conversely, of the items that worried the students during sixth grade, getting to class on time and new rules and expectations were chosen at higher levels by students from self-contained classrooms. The heightened worries may be explained by students from self-contained classrooms having never been exposed to the team teaching structure. Previous studies revealed that by utilizing the team teaching structure in elementary school, students acquire deeper content knowledge within each subject and may benefit by being more prepared for the transition into middle school than those students in the traditional self-contained structure (Nelson & Landel, 2007).

Students from both structures indicated concern about finding their way around or getting lost in their new building. This fear could be alleviated by effective transition programs that include small group tours of the sixth grade hall and all areas of the school building the sixth graders will be using. Furthermore, strategic placement of teams

within the school will reduce the travel between classes and prevent issues with students getting lost in their new school. The data on these organizational concerns reveal that large middle schools are subdivided into schools-within-a-school and this model is associated with the smaller learning community movement (NMSA, 2010).

Classroom Structure and Academic Perceptions.

While the results were not significant, there were noteworthy findings regarding academic perceptions between the two elementary classroom structures. Self-contained students indicated higher levels of happiness regarding getting good grades, taking connection classes, and making the honor roll in sixth grade. Interestingly, team teaching students were more worried about harder classes in sixth grade compared to fifth grade. This finding conflicts with previous studies that indicated that in the team teaching setting, teachers successfully establish supportive relationships with individual students and provide motivation for student development in many areas of their academics (Strahan, 2008). However, students from the self-contained elementary structure were 12.7% more worried about new or harder teachers in sixth grade compared to team teaching students. The NMSA (2010) stated that effective team teaching leads to increased student achievement, an enhanced school climate, and positive student attitudes. Based on these findings, self-contained students appeared slightly more prepared academically regarding expectations but were also more concerned about their new teachers than team teaching students. Previous studies have revealed that team teaching creates the foundation for successful, highly-functional middle schools by creating small learning communities characterized by a sense of family (NMSA, 2010).

While not statistically significant, students from self-contained classrooms

believed their elementary school teachers or counselors were helpful during their transition to middle school more strongly than students from team teaching classrooms. This finding relates to Wallace's (2007) findings that smaller teacher-to-student ratios allow for more time to develop relationships and increases social bonding between students and teachers. With students from self-contained classrooms spending increased time with their elementary school teacher, the social bonds formed in elementary school may have benefitted those students during their middle school transition compared to students in a team teaching setting. Given the complexity of the development of early adolescence, creating an appropriate instructional climate designed to address the unique developmental needs of young students is crucial for appropriate student development (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Conclusions

Evidence from this study suggests that elementary classroom structure may impact student discipline during the transition to middle school. Students from the self-contained classroom structure in elementary school may not be prepared for common aspects of team teaching such as changing classes, having multiple teachers for various subjects during the same day, getting to class on time, and organizational issues such as losing school work or supplies. The transition to middle school is a process which brings anxiety and stress for most adolescents, and the extra burdens associated with transitioning to middle school from a self-contained classroom may contribute to increased discipline referrals.

The findings also indicate that males and students with a disadvantaged socio-economic status may also experience increased discipline issues during their transition

into middle school. This data corresponds with previous studies and highlights the challenges facing schools designated as Title I status and/or schools located in economically disadvantaged communities. Given the state of the U.S. economy and its current direction, the number of socio-economically disadvantaged students may continue to increase, leading to increased discipline issues as indicated by current data. Through increased collaboration with feeder elementary schools, middle schools may be able to proactively identify and support students at risk of experiencing behavior issues as they enter sixth grade**.**

The data from this study indicated that students were happy about being given more freedom, using a locker, attending school events, and making new friends. As a way to help alleviate stress and anxiety of rising sixth graders, these positive aspects of middle school should be discussed and promoted by middle school administrators and teachers. By celebrating these positive aspects of middle school, a sense of excitement and belonging may begin to develop before students step foot on campus. Conversely, students entering middle school are concerned about getting lost, having new teachers, new rules, and harder classes than fifth grade. These are the issues an effective transition program should address when parents and students visit during orientation or schedule pick-up before the start of school. A student packet should be given to each student that includes a detailed class schedule with room numbers and class times, the locker number and combination for each student, a copy of the school handbook, and a map of the school.

This study investigated the relationship between elementary classroom structure and student discipline and student perceptions of their middle school transition

experience. The student data involving discipline referrals and classroom structure may provide elementary principals with data concerning how to configure their fifth grade teaching setting. Middle school principals may be able to more effectively identify at risk students regarding discipline referrals. The participants provided useful information regarding their transition experience and that data may help middle school leader develop a more encompassing and comprehensive transition program that promotes a successful transition into middle school.

Recommendations

The findings from this study indicate that elementary classroom structure, gender, and socio-economic status all impact student discipline referrals during the sixth grade year of the transition into middle school. Various items that transitional students are both excited about and concerned with regarding middle school have been identified in this study and may be useful when developing an effective transition program. Recommendations for implementation of the recommendations of this study and for further research are explained in the following sections.

Implementing the Recommendations of the Study

1. Given the previous studies on bullying and the harmful effects it poses to adolescents, a school-wide bullying prevention program effectively implemented may alleviate fifth grade students' anxiety about their transition to middle school.
2. With getting lost being a concern for students, school tours should be considered during orientation programs and during the first week of their sixth grade school year.

3. One of the primary factors in this study was the data on student discipline referrals. However, there may be inconsistencies regarding the behaviors that resulted in a discipline referral at each elementary school. Increased collaboration among elementary schools will promote consistent discipline practices for all elementary schools in the school district.
4. School districts should consider implementing team teaching in the fifth grade of elementary school. This will better prepare students for their transition into middle school, specifically with changing classes, arriving on time for each class, and exposure to multiple teachers throughout the school day.
5. In order to promote social skills and improve student behavior, especially among males, a gender-specific advisement period could be implemented during the sixth grade. With male teachers with the boys and females teachers with the girls, teachers would meet with students once a week to discuss effective communication, school rules, and model appropriate situational behaviors.
6. Principals and guidance counselors from the elementary and middle schools should meet in the spring each year and identify students at risk for disciplinary actions. By discussing each individual student and the problem behaviors they have exhibited, behavior plans can be established for incoming at risk students.

Future Research

1. Future studies should consider a longitudinal design in which students from both elementary classroom structures are surveyed in three phases: the spring

of their fifth grade year, the fall of their sixth grade year, and finally, the spring of their sixth grade year.

2. Future researchers should include student achievement along with student discipline referrals to achieve a more comprehensive study.
3. Future studies should consider a casual-comparison design in which two different samples with both elementary classroom structures are utilized.
4. With classroom structures varying in fifth grade, attaining information from elementary school principals about their reasoning for determining each structure as well as their opinions about the benefits and limitations of each structure may be beneficial.
5. Group interviews with sixth grade students from each elementary classroom structure may give additional insight to their perceptions of the three constructs associated with middle school transition.
6. Future studies should consider using a larger sample along with a more diversified population regarding race.
7. A different instrument should be used when attempting to gain knowledge of student perceptions of their middle school transition experience.

Dissemination

The findings from this study will be disseminated in several ways. This dissertation will be published into a hardbound book, and a copy will be placed in the Zach S. Henderson Library on the campus of Georgia Southern University, as well as in the Department of Leadership, Technology, and Human Development. An electronic version has also been made available on the Internet. The researcher will make plans to

publish the results of this study in the appropriate scholarly journals. The findings from this study will be shared with the appropriate central office personnel of Fuller County and the principal of Green Middle School. Finally, the researcher will create a white paper of this study for school districts interested in acquiring additional data concerning elementary classroom structure and its impact on middle school transition.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE

We would like to know more about your move from elementary school to middle school. Please help us by completing the questions below.

---

1. What elementary school did you attend last year?

A	B	C	Other
O	O	O	O

2. When you first came to **middle school,** what things about moving on to the middle school **made you happy**? Please fill in all that apply**.**

O being in a larger school	O older students	O getting good grades
O more freedom	O making new friends	O taking connection classes (P.E., Band, Art, ect)
O more students	O having new teachers	O more choices at lunch
O being able to choose some classes	O participate in sports, clubs, etc.	O attending school events (football games, dances)
O changing classes	O using a locker	O making the Renaissance program (honor roll)

3. When you first came to **middle school,** what things about moving on to the middle school **were you worried about**? Please fill in all that apply.

O finding my way around or getting lost	O harder classes than 5th grade	O Getting to class on time
O getting along with other students	O new rules and expectations	O Older students
O pressure to do well	O how much homework I would have	O Getting good grades
O changing classes	O Peer pressure	O Learning my new teachers' name
O Fitting in or making friends	O Receiving In-school suspension	O Not knowing anyone in my classes
O New or more students	O Being bullied	O Being unorganized/losing work
O Changing clothes for P.E. class	O Using a locker	
O Hard or unfriendly teachers	O Riding the bus	

4. How was the move from elementary school to middle school for you?

Very Difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very Easy
O	O	O	O

5. How many discipline referrals have you received this year?	0-1	2-5	6 or more
	O	O	O

6. How helpful has each of the following been to you in moving from elementary to middle school:	Not Very Helpful	A Little Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful
A. Middle school principals and counselors coming to the elementary school to talk about classes I can take in middle school.	O	O	O	O
B. Comments and suggestions from elementary school teachers or counselors.	O	O	O	O
C. The schedule pick-up before the start of school.	O	O	O	O
D. My sixth grade teachers.	O	O	O	O
E. The principal and assistant principals.	O	O	O	O
F. Team building activities.	O	O	O	O
G. My parents	O	O	O	O
H. Other family members (brothers, sisters, cousins, etc.)	O	O	O	O
I. Students/friends in my classes	O	O	O	O
J. Older students at the middle school	O	O	O	O
K. Counselors at the middle school	O	O	O	O
L. Other adults (band director, coaches, secretaries) at the middle school.	O	O	O	O

7. Please answer the next 5 questions by filling in answers that *best* describes how you feel about **this middle school.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel close to other students at this school	O	O	O	O	O
I feel like I'm part of this school.	O	O	O	O	O
Teachers at this school care about students.	O	O	O	O	O
There is at least one adult at this school I feel comfortable talking to about personal questions and concerns.	O	O	O	O	O
I am happy to be at this school.	O	O	O	O	O

8. Since coming to the middle school in which of the following activities have you been involved? (Please fill in all that apply)

O a school sports team or cheerleading
O a school club
O a school play or drama group
O the school band
O the school chorus
O none

9. In which of the following activities are you interested in becoming involved? (Please fill in all that apply)

O a school sports team or cheerleading
O a school club
O a school play or drama group
O the school band
O the school chorus
O none

APPENDIX B

AMENDMENTS TO THE STUDENT TRANSITION

QUESTIONNAIRE (Akos, 2002)

Original Item(s)	Change(s) made to the Item(s)
12. What elementary school did you go to last year? _____	1. What elementary school did you attend last year? O. Graysville O. Ringgold O. Tiger Creek O. Other
1. When you were in **elementary school,** what things about moving on to the middle school did you **look forward to or were happy** about? Please fill in all that apply**.**	2. When you first came to **middle school,** what things about moving on to the middle school **made you happy**? Please fill in all that apply
1. PE class	2. taking connection classes (P.E., Band, Art, ect)
1. more choices at lunch	2. making the Renaissance program (honor roll)
2. When you were in **elementary school** what things caused you to be **concerned or worry** about moving on to the middle school. Please check all that apply.	3. When you first came to **middle school,** what things about moving on to the middle school **were you worried about**? Please check all that apply.
2. safety or being hurt by other students	3. being bullied
2. showering in PE class	3. changing clothes in PE class
3. How was the move from elementary school to middle school for you? O. Difficult O. Somewhat Difficult O. Somewhat easy O. Easy	4. How was the move from elementary school to middle school for you? O. Very Difficult O. Difficult O. Easy O. Very Easy
4.d. Back to school day at the mall.	6.d. My sixth grade teachers.
4.e. The self guided tour of the middle school we had this year before school started in August.	6.e. The principals and assistant principals
4.L. Other adults (such as administrators and/or coaches) at the middle school	6.L. Other adults (band director, coaches, secretaries) at the middle school.

APPENDIX B

AMENDMENTS TO THE STUDENT TRANSITION

QUESTIONNAIRE (AKOS, 2002) (CONT.)

Additions and Amendments to the Original STQ

Added Items:

3. changing Classes
3. receiving In-school suspension
3. not knowing anyone in my class
3. being unorganized and losing my work

5. How many discipline referrals have you received this year?	0-1	2-5	6 or more
	O	O	O

6. the schedule pick-up before the start of school

- For questions twelve and thirteen inquiring about student participation in extracurricular activities, the items "the school newspaper or yearbook" and "student government" were removed due to students not having the option of being a part of those activities.

APPENDIX C

STUDENT TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM ANALYSIS

Item	Research	Research Question
1. Elementary school	Byrnes & Ruby, 2007; Theriot & Dupper, 2010;	1
2. Larger School	Byrnes & Ruby, 2007;	1.B
2. More Freedom	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005;	1.B
2. More Students	Parker, 2009;	1; 1.B
2. Choosing Classes	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Friedel et al, 2010;	1.B
2. Changing Classes	Akos & Galassi, 2004a;	1; 1.B
2. Older Students	Kelly & Decker, 2009;	1; 1.B
2. Making New Friends	Oh et al, 2008; Veronneau & Dishion, 2010;	1; 1.B
2. Having New Teachers	Allison & Rehm, 2007; Haselhuhn et al, 2007;	1.B
2. Extracurricular Activities	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Akos, 2006; Fox et al, 2010;	1.B
2. Using A Locker	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Byrnes & Ruby, 2007;	1; 1.B
2. Getting Good Grades	Kelly & Decker, 2009; Friedel et al, 2010; Schielack & Seeley, 2010; Eccles & Roeser, 2011;	1.B
2. Connection Classes	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Friedel et al, 2010;	1.B
2. More Lunch Choices	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005;	1.B
2. Attending School Events	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005;	1.B
2. Making Honor Roll	Kelly & Decker, 2009; Friedel et al, 2010; Schielack & Seeley, 2010; Eccles & Roeser, 2011;	1; 1.B
3. Getting Lost	Booth, Sheehan, & Earley, 2007; Byrnes & Ruby, 2007;	1.B
3. Getting Along with Other Students	Oh et al, 2008; Veronneau & Dishion, 2010; Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008;	1.B
3. Pressure to do well	Barber & Olsen, 2004; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005;	1.B
3. Changing Classes	Akos & Galassi, 2004a;	1; 1.B
3. Making New Friends	Oh et al, 2008; Veronneau & Dishion, 2010;	1; 1.B
3. New and More Students	Parker, 2009;	1.B
3. Changing Clothes for P.E. Class	Wigfield & Wagner, 2005; Kelly & Decker, 2009;	1.B
3. Hard or Unfriendly Teachers	Allison & Rehm, 2007; Haselhuhn et al, 2007;	1.B

APPENDIX C

STUDENT TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM ANALYSIS (CONT.)

Item	Research	Research Question
3. Harder Classes	Lau, Liem, and Nie, 2008; Schielack & Seeley, 2010;	1; 1.B
3. New Rules/Expectations	Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Theriot & Dupper, 2010;	1; 1.B
3. Homework	Lau, Liem, and Nie, 2008; Kelly & Decker, 2009; Schielack & Seeley, 2010;	1.B
3. Peer Pressure	Zimmer-Gembeck, Geiger, & Crick, 2005; Keifer & Ryan, 2008;	1.B
3. Receiving I.S.S.	Arica, 2007; Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Theriot & Dupper, 2010;	1; 1.B
3. Being Bullied	Meyers-Adams & Conner, 2008; Novick & Isaacs, 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Slovack & Singer, 2011;	1.B
3. Using a Locker	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Byrnes & Ruby, 2007;	1.B
3. Riding the Bus	Booth, Sheehan, & Earley, 2007; Byrnes & Ruby, 2007;	1.B
3. Getting to Class on Time	Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Theriot & Dupper, 2010;	1
3. Older Students	Kelly & Decker, 2009;	1; 1.B
3. Getting Good Grades	Kelly & Decker, 2009; Friedel et al, 2010; Schielack & Seeley, 2010; Eccles & Roeser, 2011;	1.B
3. Learning New Teachers' Names	Allison & Rehm, 2007; Haselhuhn et al, 2007;	1.B
4. The Move from Elementary to Middle School	Akos, 2006; Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006; Schielack & Seeley, 2010;	1; 1.B
5. Discipline Referrals	Arica, 2007; Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Theriot & Dupper, 2010;	1; 1.B
6. a. Principals and Counselors Visit	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Byrnes & Ruby, 2007;	1.B
6. b. Comments from Elementary Teachers and Counselors	Friedel et al, 2010; Eccles & Roeser, 2011;	1.B
6. c. Schedule pick-up	Booth, Sheehan, & Earley, 2007; Byrnes & Ruby, 2007;	1.B
6. d. Sixth Grade Teachers	Friedel et al, 2010; Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Haselhuhn et al, 2007;	1.B

APPENDIX C

STUDENT TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM ANALYSIS (CONT.)

Item	Research	Research Question
6. e. Principal and Assistant Principals	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Akos, 2006; Byrnes & Ruby, 2007	1.B
6. f. Team Building Activities	Oh et al, 2008; Veronneau & Dishion, 2010;	1.B
6. g. My Parents	Barber & Olsen, 2004; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005; Parker, 2009;	1.B
6. h. Other Family Members	Barber & Olsen, 2004; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005; Parker, 2009;	1.B
6. i. Students/Friends in my classes	Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Oh et al, 2008; Veronneau & Dishion, 2010;	1.B
6. j. Older Students at School	Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Oh et al, 2008; Kelly & Decker, 2009; Veronneau & Dishion, 2010;	1.B
6. k. Middle School Counselors	Friedel et al, 2010; Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Haselhuhn et al, 2007;	1.B
6. l. Other Adults (Band director, Coaches)	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Akos, 2006; Fox et al, 2010;	1; 1.B
6. m. Anyone/anything else	Booth, Sheehan, & Earley, 2007; Byrnes & Ruby, 2007;	1.B
7. Feel Close to Other Students	Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Oh et al, 2008; Kelly & Decker, 2009; Veronneau & Dishion, 2010;	1.B
8. Feel a Part of the School	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Parker, 2009;	1.B
9. Teachers care about Students	Allison & Rehm, 2007; Haselhuhn et al, 2007;	1.B
10. There is one Adult at School that I can Talk To	Oh et al, 2008; Veronneau & Dishion, 2010;	1.B
11. Happy to be at this School	Barber & Olsen, 2004; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005; Parker, 2009;	1.B
12. What extracurricular activities have you been involved in? (All Items)	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Akos, 2006; Fox et al, 2010;	1.B
13. What extracurricular activities are you interested in being involved in? (All Items)	Akos & Galassi, 2004a; Akos, 2006; Fox et al, 2010;	1.B

APPENDIX D

STUDENT TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM ALIGNMENT TO THE SOCIAL AND PERSONAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND ACADEMIC CONSTRUCTS

	Social and Personal Construct	**Organizational Construct**	**Academic Construct**
Checklist Item #2	More freedom; more students; older students; making new friends; more choices at lunch; attending school events;	Larger school; changing classes; having new teachers; participate in extracurricular; using a locker;	Choosing classes; getting good grades; taking connection classes; making the honor roll;
Checklist Item #3	Getting along with other students; fitting in/making friends; more students; peer pressure; being bullied; older students; not knowing anyone in my classes;	Getting lost; changing classes; changing clothes for PE class; new rules and expectations; receiving ISS; using a locker; riding the bus; getting to class on time; learning new teachers' names; being unorganized and losing my work;	Pressure to do well; hard/unfriendly teachers; harder classes than 5th grade; amount of homework; getting good grades;
Item #6	F; G; H; I; J;	C; E; K; L	A; B; D;
	Item 7;	Items 8 and 9;	

APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FROM

STUDENT TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 2: When you first came to middle school, what things about moving on to the middle school made you happy?

Survey Question 2	Self-Contained	Team Teaching
Being in a larger school building	48.4 % (31)	45.0% (45)
More freedom	78.1% (50)	71.0% (71)
More students	40.6% (26)	32.0% (32)
Being able to choose some classes	37.5% (24)	35.0% (35)
Changing classes	62.5% (40)	37.0% (37)
Older students	21.9% (14)	10.0% (10)
Making new friends	71.9% (46)	65.0% (65)
Having new teachers	54.7% (35)	41.0% (41)
Participating in sports, clubs, etc.	64.1% (41)	47.0% (47)
Using a locker	82.8% (53)	82.0% (82)
Getting good grades	62.5% (40)	44.0% (44)
Taking connection classes	85.9% (55)	62.0% (62)
More choices at lunch	40.6% (26)	36.0% (36)
Attending school events	70.3% (45)	50.0% (50)
Making Renaissance program (honor roll)	64.1% (41)	53.0% (53)

APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FROM

STUDENT TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE (CONT.)

Question 3: When you first came to middle school, what things about moving on to the middle school were you worried about?

Survey Question 3	Self-Contained	Team Teaching
Finding my way around or getting lost	64.1% (41)	54.0% (54)
Getting along with other students	28.1% (18)	30.0% (30)
Pressure to do well	32.8% (21)	30.0% (30)
Changing classes	20.3% (13)	13.0% (13)
Fitting in or making friends	31.3% (20)	27.0% (27)
New or more students	21.9% (14)	20.0% (20)
Changing clothes for P.E. class	15.6% (10)	16.0% (16)
Hard or unfriendly teachers	54.7% (35)	42.0% (42)
Harder classes than fifth grade	40.6% (26)	48.0% (48)
New rules and expectations	46.9% (30)	32.0% (32)
How much homework I would have	56.3% (36)	58.0% (58)
Peer pressure	21.9% (14)	21.0% (21)
Receiving in-school suspension (ISS)	26.6% (17)	25.0% (25)
Being bullied	32.8% (21)	13.0% (13)
Using a locker	14.1% (9)	15.0% (15)
Riding the bus	9.4% (6)	11.0% (11)
Getting to class on time	51.6% (33)	32.0% (32)
Older students	18.8% (12)	16.0% (16)
Getting good grades	32.8% (21)	28.0% (28)
Learning my new teachers' names	17.2% (11)	14.0% (14)
Not knowing anyone in my classes	39.1% (25)	39.0% (39)
Being unorganized and losing my work	37.5% (24)	24.0% (24)

APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FROM

STUDENT TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE (CONT.)

Question 4: How was the move from elementary school to middle school for you?

Survey Question 4	Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very Easy
Self-Contained	4.7% (3)	6.3% (4)	53.1% (34)	35.9% (23)
Team Teaching	2.0% (2)	6.0% (6)	49.0% (49)	43.0% (43)

Question 5: How many discipline referrals have you received this year?

Survey Question 5	0-1	2-5	6 or more
Self-Contained	85.9% (55)	9.4% (6)	4.7% (3)
Team Teaching	87.0% (87)	10.0% (10)	3.0% (3)

Question 6: How helpful has each of the following been to you in moving from elementary to middle school:

M.S. Principals and Counselors Visit	Not Very Helpful	A Little Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful	No Answer
Self-Contained	23.4% (15)	25.0% (16)	31.3% (20)	20.3% (13)	0% (0)
Team Teaching	13.0%(13)	29.0%(29)	38.0% (38)	19.0%(19)	1.0% (1)
E.S. Teachers or Counselors					
Self-Contained	23.4% (15)	25.0% (16)	35.9% (23)	15.6% (10)	0% (0)
Team Teaching	17.0% (17)	38.0% (38)	31.0% (31)	13.0% (13)	1.0% (1)
Summer Schedule Pick-Up					
Self-Contained	7.8% (5)	17.2% (11)	26.6% (17)	46.9% (30)	1.6% (1)
Team Teaching	12.0% (12)	19.0% (19)	21.0% (21)	47.0% (47)	1.0% (1)
My Sixth Grade Teachers					
Self-Contained	12.5% (8)	10.9% (7)	29.7% (19)	43.8% (28)	3.1% (2)
Team Teaching	5.0% (5)	16.0% (16)	39.0% (39)	38.0% (38)	2.0% (2)
M.S. Principal and A.P.					
Self-Contained	10.9% (7)	18.8% (12)	31.3% (20)	35.9% (23)	3.1% (2)
Team Teaching	10.0% (10)	21.0% (21)	36.0% (36)	31.0% (31)	2.0% (2)

APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FROM

STUDENT TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE (CONT.)

Team Building Activities	Not Very Helpful	A Little Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful	No Answer
Self-Contained	17.2% (11)	15.6% (10)	35.9% (23)	28.1% (18)	3.1% (2)
Team Teaching	15.0% (15)	23.0% (23)	35.0% (35)	23.0% (23)	4.0% (4)
My Parents					
Self-Contained	7.8% (5)	12.5% (8)	25.0% (16)	53.1% (34)	1.6% (1)
Team Teaching	5.0% (5)	7.0% (7)	22.0% (22)	63.0% (63)	3.0% (3)
Other Family Members					
Self-Contained	17.2% (11)	15.6% (10)	37.5% (24)	28.1% (18)	1.6% (1)
Team Teaching	17.0% (17)	15.0% (15)	30.0% (30)	37.0% (37)	1.0% (1)
Students/Friends in Class					
Self-Contained	3.1% (2)	18.8% (12)	32.8% (21)	40.6% (26)	4.7% (3)
Team Teaching	6.0% (6)	15.0% (15)	44.0% (44)	33.0% (33)	2.0% (2)
Older Students at M.S.					
Self-Contained	28.1% (18)	26.6% (17)	25.0% (16)	17.2% (11)	3.1% (2)
Team Teaching	21.0% (21)	27.0% (27)	37.0% (37)	12.0% (12)	3.0% (3)
Counselors at M.S.					
Self-Contained	28.1% (18)	18.8% (12)	26.6% (17)	23.4% (15)	3.1% (2)
Team Teaching	23.0% (23)	23.0% (23)	26.0% (26)	24.0% (24)	4.0% (4)
Other Adults at M.S.					
Self-Contained	9.4% (6)	17.2% (11)	25.0% (16)	45.3% (29)	3.1% (2)
Team Teaching	8.0% (8)	22.0% (22)	29.0% (29)	40.0% (40)	1.0% (1)

Question 7: Please answer the next five questions by filling in answers that best describe how you feel about middle school.

Close to students at this school	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Answer
Self-Contained	3.1% (2)	0% (0)	25.0% (16)	42.2% (27)	26.6% (17)	3.1% (2)
Team Teaching	5.0% (5)	4.0% (4)	19.0% (19)	49.0% (49)	23.0% (23)	0% (0)
Feel a part of school						
Self-Contained	3.1% (2)	1.6% (1)	10.9% (7)	45.3% (29)	37.5% (24)	1.6% (1)
Team Teaching	4.0% (4)	1.0% (1)	14.0% (14)	40.0% (40)	39.0% (39)	2.0% (2)

APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FROM

STUDENT TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE (CONT.)

Teachers care about students						
Self-Contained	4.7% (3)	6.3% (4)	10.9% (7)	34.4% (22)	42.2% (27)	1.6% (1)
Team Teaching	4.0% (4)	1.0% (1)	12.0% (12)	49.0% (49)	32.0% (32)	2.0% (2)
One adult to talk to						
Self-Contained	17.2% (11)	4.7% (3)	14.1% (9)	29.7% (19)	32.8% (21)	1.6% (1)
Team Teaching	13.0% (13)	8.0% (8)	13.0% (13)	36.0% (36)	29.0% (29)	1.0% (1)
Happy at this school						
Self-Contained	4.7% (3)	3.1% (2)	6.3% (4)	23.4% (15)	57.8% (37)	4.7% (3)
Team Teaching	4.0% (4)	1.0% (1)	3.0% (3)	33.0% (33)	57.0% (57)	2.0% (2)

Question 8: Since coming to the middle school in which activities have you been involved?

Survey Question 8	Self-Contained	Team Teaching
Sports, cheerleading, or dance team	29.7% (19)	27.0% (27)
School Play or Drama Club	3.1% (2)	8.0% (8)
Chorus	3.1% (2)	22.0% (22)
School Club	15.6% (10)	8.0% (8)
Leadership Position	10.9% (7)	3.0% (3)
Band	37.5% (24)	25.0% (25)
None	34.4% (22)	29.0% (29)

Question 9: Which activities are you interested in becoming involved?

Survey Question 9	Self-Contained	Team Teaching
Sports, cheerleading, or dance team	67.2% (43)	70.0% (70)
School Play or Drama Club	12.5% (8)	15.0% (15)
Chorus	7.8% (5)	14.0% (14)
School Club	26.6% (17)	19.0% (19)
Leadership Position	23.4% (15)	22.0% (22)
Band	28.1% (18)	14.0% (14)
None	10.9% (7)	15.0% (15)