Fall 2008

High School Students' Perceptions of Their High School Experience

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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR

HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

Perception data are invaluable to school improvement plans. Student perception data, in particular, is useful when determining indicators related to student success or failure. The purpose of this study was to understand high school students' perceptions of their high school experience. Data for this quantitative study was collected using a survey instrument. The 1,120 participants, who were ninth through twelfth grade students attending an urban, diverse public high school in Georgia, responded to questions related to belongingness, peer relationships, student relationships with teachers and other staff members and teacher qualities and instructional strategies. Demographic data relating to grade level, race, gender, academic program, and extracurricular activity involvement were collected to support this study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, Independent Samples T Tests, and ANOVAs with PASW 18. Major conclusions from the study included (1) many students do not feel safe at school, (2) ninth grade students experienced a greater sense of belongingness and had better relationships with adults than tenth grade students, (3) although peer relationships rated positive in

the school, 24% of the students reported feelings of unfair treatment by peers, (4) most students reported fair treatment from adults; however, 36% reported unfair treatment by administrators, (5) most students reported that school is not fun, (6) students enjoy learning and understand the significance of hard work, (7) not all students feel that school is preparing them for what they want to do after high school, (8) students prefer to learn material that is relevant to real-life experiences, (9) not all students think their teachers understand when students have personal problems, (10) students are not convinced that teachers care, (11) students' preferred learning styles are not always comparable to teachers instructional strategies, and (12) there is little computer usage during instructional time.

INDEX WORDS: High School Students, Student Perceptions, High School Experience, Belongingness, Peer Relationships, Instructional Strategies, Teacher Qualities, School Improvement, School, Student-Teacher Relationships

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2010

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Electronic Version Approved:
December 2010

DEDICATION

In honor and memory of my parents, Albert and Castella Patterson, I dedicate this work to them as they, together, taught me determination and perseverance. Thanks to them, I have learned an indeterminate number of lifelong lessons.

In honor and recognition of my husband, J.R. Lowery, I dedicate this work to you for providing extraordinary support and unconditional love throughout this project. Your patience and understanding were most appreciated.

To all of my students, past and present, don't ever give up! You can do whatever you set your mind on doing!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The thought of any high school student's high school experience is broad and lends itself to a multitude of beliefs, perceptions, and feelings. To a tenth grade student at Castelberta High School (Pseudonym) it meant school disconnection (L.R. Lowery, personal communication, November, 2008). According to this tenth grader, he was not connected to his school or to the people within. As far as he was concerned, the entire educational system was useless. His disappointments ranged from a dissatisfaction of teacher qualities and ineffective teaching strategies to his reluctance to participate in extracurricular activities at his school. Somewhat more dramatic than the Castelberta High School student, a West Coast High School student experienced such negative peer interactions with students in her school that she viewed her high school experience as "hell" (Adler, 1999). Ann Davidson's (1996) interview with a high school African-American male student revealed a student's contentment with the way things were – "...we even got sent to juvenile cause it was like that, that was back in the days when everything was crazy and we didn't care. And before we realized who we were, where we were going, we were just, you know, out there, floating around..." (p. 1).

Contrary to the experiences of the previously mentioned students, a second time freshman at Castelberta High School found school to be a safe haven. School for him was freedom from a chaotic home environment and a free, daily meal (L.R. Lowery, personal communication, March, 2007). Despite his academic challenges, he considered his experience in high school as a positive experience because it was a comfort zone away from home.

Various aspects of schooling are valued by students according to their background, experiences, and interest. The above mentioned student-related scenarios present a small lens view of high school students' high school experiences. In essence, these students, because of their experiences, have developed a perception about a component of their educational process. Considering students' perceptions of their school experiences could serve as a foundation for establishing effective organizational practices and policies and for creating a school culture and climate conducive to positive student development.

Statement of Problem

School improvement initiatives are often developed and implemented as a result of policymakers, educators and/or a group of education-interested adults having discussions, reviewing data, analyzing data, identifying trends, formulating beliefs and opinions, and/or sharing their perspectives. Students, the primary consumers of education, are often not included in the school improvement process.

Students, like all other people involved in schools as well as those who are not directly involved with schools, have perceptions too. Seeking and valuing input from individuals who have firsthand knowledge of classroom instructional practices and who are actually experiencing school on a consistent basis could be the roadmap to an effective school improvement process. Affording students the opportunity to share their perceptions of their high school experience could prove instrumental to policymakers, educators, and students. Students learn with greater depth and understanding when they share ideas with others, engage in brainstorming activities, consider other points of view, and broaden their own thought processes.

Collecting and analyzing data from high school students about their thoughts and feelings as they relate to belongingness, peer relationships, relationships with teachers and other staff members, and teacher qualities and instructional strategies would be helpful in understanding high school students' perceptions about their overall high school experience. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand high school students' perceptions of their high school experience.

Research Questions

The researcher will consider the following overarching question in this study: What perceptions do high school students have about their high school experience?

The specific research questions will be used to answer the overarching question:

1. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about their sense of belongingness at school?

2. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about respect for others at school?

3. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about their relationships with teachers and other staff members?

4. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about teacher qualities and instructional strategies?

5. Do perceptions of high school students vary by grade, race, gender, or academic program?

Conceptual Framework

The effectiveness of the traditional top-down leadership approach has diminished in the school improvement process (MacNeil & McClanahan, 2005). A more prominent

and twenty-first century leadership model that better supports an effective school improvement process is shared leadership as this model includes the perspectives of students, parents, teachers and school leaders. After all, student-learning is the responsibility of everyone involved. For the purpose of this study, shared leadership is the appropriate involvement of existing human resources to include students. Granting students the opportunity to express ideas and beliefs and to be heard can lead to thoughtful choices in and out of the classroom. Although teachers and others may have their preconceived notions about the high school experience, only high school students can truly portray existing high school experiences and interpretations.

The Circle of Shared Leadership is a graphic representation of this conceptual framework (see Figure 1).

> When people think of leadership, they often think of the "traditional leader" – the person who is good at public speaking, who has experience, and who is well respected by many people. The idea of shared leadership recognizes that there are several ways to provide leadership, some of which are non-traditional. Shared leadership is a way for groups to make decisions by coming to a consensus. It allows a group to take the diverse opinions of all involved and incorporate them, in some form, into the actions of the group.

People who **RELATE EXPERIENCE** share their wisdom, skills and knowledge with the group. They connect the present with the future.

People who **FACILITATE** help move the team or community to their goals through discussions at meetings or gatherings. They rely on the group's ability and seek consensus.

People who **CHAMPION** are those who really get behind an idea and provide the spirit and will to get the ball rolling. They get the work out – letting people know what is going on and building the effort.

People who **IMPLEMENT** work with their team or community to take the actions that will help them move toward their goals. They enjoy the discovery that comes with doing things and moving toward results and outcomes.

Figure 1. The Circle of Shared Leadership

A team needs to have all of the parts of shared leadership represented. Individual group members can fill one or more roles, and each role can be filled by more than one person at the same time. (Adapted from Institute of Cultural Affairs)

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[1]From "The Circle of Shared Leadership," adapted from Institute of Cultural Affairs. Copyright 2001 by Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development/Tools Center. Reprinted with permission from croach@theinnovationcenter.org.

Significance of Study

This study is intended to inform teachers and school administrators about the relevance of including student perceptions in the school improvement process. Student perceptions relating to their sense of belongingness, peer relationships, relationships with teachers and other staff members, and teacher qualities and instructional strategies will be exposed.

This study should be of specific interest to state, district and high school administrators for the sake of helping all students experience educational success. The findings from this research may be a valuable resource for continuous school improvement initiatives – specifically, student learning. The data collected may serve as a tool for state, district, and high school administrators in reviewing and revising current school practices and procedures. Collected data may help school administrators determine best practices relating to overall student success.

This study will help high school students and teachers self-examine their individual and collective roles and responsibilities for developing peer relationships and teacher-student relationships. This study will also afford students an opportunity to view and express their perceptions and attitudes about their high school experience anonymously and without repercussion. Teachers will be able to use data collected from this study to establish better teacher-student relationships and to implement improved instructional strategies for all learners. Ultimately, this information may be used to improve school experiences for high school students and to help teachers establish quality relationships with students.

Data from this study should be of value to parents who desire to help their student(s) have a positive high school experience. Factors relating to students' home environment that may influence the school environment and vice versa may be revealed. Such knowledge would create an opportunity for parents to make informed decisions as they relate to their high school students' school experience.

This information would be significant to the researcher because it would provide actual feedback about the high school experiences of students from a diverse, urban high school setting. As a high school principal, this researcher would gain valuable knowledge from students to review, to revise and to implement local school improvement initiatives. This researcher would also gain information that would be helpful in determining professional learning activities and hiring needs. Additionally, this information would assist the researcher in developing a school culture that is conducive to learning and achievement oriented for all students.

 Overall, this study will be useful for advancing the dialogue concerning students' perceptions about high school and factors that may contribute to student success or failure. This research will contribute to the promotion of professional and personal growth, improved practices to enhance student learning, and advancements in the teaching profession.

<center>Autobiographical Background</center>

As a high school principal who has experienced a range of concerns, complaints, and compliments from parents, teachers and students, the researcher has learned that it is important to gather student perspectives and that listening to students is a valuable resource. The interest in this study developed after a conversation with a high achieving

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student who was experiencing success and failure at the same time. The conversation confirmed that educators should pause long enough to listen to students in order to determine what is important to them, to determine appropriate actions to assist them and to determine which services, procedures or programs to start, revise, continue or stop. Although observing students interact with peers, teachers and other staff members in the school is a helpful method of determining student interest and character, it is believed that direct feedback from students would provide a more specific and realistic perspective as students can provide first-hand information pertaining to practices, procedures and policies relating to the high school experience.

<div align="center">Procedures</div>

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to understand high school students' perceptions of their high school experience. Data was collected from a sample of high school students to generalize high school students' perceptions of their high school experience. This research study utilized a quantitative survey design. Versatility, efficiency, and generalizibility were the three primary reasons for the usage of a survey instrument (Creswell, 2003). An expected rapid turn-around in data collection and the ability to gather the perceptions of the participants anonymously characterized the survey design as the preferred type of data collection method. The researcher used content from a previously developed and validated *Education for the Future* questionnaire to develop a survey specific to this study. The survey measured the perceptions of ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students as they pertain to belongingness, peer relationships, student relationships with teachers and other staff members, and teacher qualities and

instructional strategies. Demographic data such as grade level, gender, race, extracurricular involvement, and academic program were used to categorize similarities and differences in students' perceptions about belongingness, peer relationships, relationships with teachers and other staff members, and teacher qualities and instructional strategies.

Population

The population of this study was students attending urban public high schools in the state of Georgia.

Participants

The participants for this study were students at Castelberta High School, an urban, diverse public high school. The mixed-gender student population is comprised of more than 400 ninth graders, nearly 400 tenth graders, almost 350 eleventh graders, and about 350 twelfth graders. The racial composition of the selected high school consisted of 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, 10% Asian, 9% Hispanic, 55% Black/African American, 23% White and 2% students who categorized themselves as Other.

Instrumentation

Via email correspondence with Mr. Bradley J. Geise, *Education for the Future's* Questionnaire Service Administrator, the researcher gained permission to use the content of a previously developed and validated *Education for the Future* questionnaire. *Education for the Future* ensured the content validity of the student questionnaire during their process of questionnaire development. *Education for the Future* staff members drafted survey items based on literature about effective schools and issues important to students and teachers interviews (Bernhardt, 1991-2007). The reliability quotient was .97

for the high school student questionnaire. Based on the research questions and a related literature review, the content of the *Education for the Future* high school student questionnaire was used to develop a survey instrument to gather perception data from Castelberta High School students pertaining to their perceptions of their high school experience.

The survey instrument was a four-point Likert-type scale of "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" and had 128 survey items to include 121 quantitative questions, two qualitative questions, and five demographic questions that pertain to students' perceptions regarding belongingness, peer relationships, relationships with teachers and other staff members, and teacher qualities and instructional strategies.

Data Collection

After securing permission to conduct this study from the school district and the Institutional Review Board, the researcher hand delivered minor assent forms (see Appendix A) and parental consent forms (see Appendix B) to all of the English/Language Arts teachers at Castelberta High School. Each English/Language Arts teacher distributed a minor assent form and a parental consent form to each of their students. The teachers instructed their students to take the forms home and to return them within three days. Each English/Language Arts teacher created and maintained a list of students who did not return their forms in order that those students did not participate in the survey (see Appendix C).

During the latter part of that same week, members of the school's journalism staff (students), who were supervised by the journalism teacher, administered the survey to students during their English/Language Arts classes. The journalism students collected

the surveys and related documents upon completion of the survey administration, placed

them in envelopes, and returned seal envelopes to the journalism teacher. Although the

survey was initially developed solely for this study, the journalism students used the

collected qualitative data to hold discussions for school newspaper topics and polling

purposes. The researcher provided the journalism teacher with the organized qualitative

data to use as polling information related to student perceptions. Upon completion of this

study, collected data will be secured and stored according to the Institutional Review

Board's guidelines.

Although data were collected primarily through a survey instrument, demographic

information such as grade level, gender, race, extracurricular involvement, and academic

program was gathered to compile student profiles and to categorize similarities and

differences in students' perceptions about their high school experiences.

Data Analysis

Information from the surveys was compiled and analyzed using the Predictive

Analytics SoftWare (PASW) Statistical 18 Package. Student information such as grade

level, gender, race, extracurricular involvement, and academic program was compiled

and charted to establish a report. Data were organized categorically and reviewed

repeatedly. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Independent Samples T Test

were used to determine how students differ across grade levels and within programs. The

Tukey honestly significant comparison test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used to

conduct post-hoc analyses.

Limitations

This study had the following limitations:

1. Students' attitudes and perceptions may have varied according to their mood or experiences on days prior to the survey as well as the day of the survey. Participants' response to the survey may have varied according to experiences at school or home days prior to the survey as well as the day of the survey.

2. Students' attitudes and perceptions may have varied according to recent changes in school rules, policies or procedures.

Delimitations

This study had the following delimitations:

1. This study was limited to Castelberta High School (Pseudonym) students who experienced high school during 2009 – 2010 academic year and to those students who agreed to participate in this study.

2. Findings may not be generalized to Georgia.

Definition of Terms

Belongingness – the extent to which students "feel" they are embedded in, and a part of, their school communities (Moody, 1997; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990).

Educational Success – a positive experience relating to the school environment (climate and culture) and academic accomplishments.

Experience – something that a student has done (Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, 2008).

Extracurricular Activity – "used to describe extra activities (such as sports) that can be done by the students in a school but that are not part of the regular schedule of classes" (Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, 2008).

Perception – "the way you think about or understand someone or something" (Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, 2008).

School Improvement – enhancing engagement through achieving a better fit between students and the school (Ruddock & Demetriou, 2003).

Summary

High school is a major milestone in the minds of high school students. Many high school students face challenges that are insurmountable. In addition to the busyness of school, this current generation of high school students is challenged with societal pressures and family pressures. Together, these factors provide high school students with beliefs, thoughts and feelings of their own. In particular, they have formed perceptions about their educational experience as school is where they spend the majority of their time.

Although high school students are old enough and are experienced enough to formulate perceptions, they have not been commonly included in school improvement initiatives. An analysis of high school students' perceptions of their high school experience will give practitioners and policymakers an opportunity to take high school students' beliefs, thoughts, and feelings into account when developing and implementing school improvement initiatives.

This chapter details the specific research questions that will guide this study and explains the procedures that will be used to gather data pertaining to high school students' perceptions of their high school experience.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents literature relevant to perceptions students have about belongingness, peer relationships, relationships with teachers and other staff members and teacher qualities and instructional strategies. Because students, the end-product consumers, are best equipped to share information about their educational experience they should be included in the process of school improvement. "As long as we exclude student perspectives from our conversations about schooling and how it needs to change, our efforts at reform will be based on an incomplete picture of life in classrooms and schools and how that life could be improved" (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 3).

Belongingness

Communities

"Communities are places where members are cared about and support each other, actively participate in and have influence on the group's activities and decisions, feel a sense of belonging and identification to the group, and have common norms, goals, and values" (Syvertsen, Flanagan & Stout, 2009; Osterman, 2000). For high school students, school is their community as school is where many of them spend a vast majority of their time (Barr & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2007). In order for students to have a desire to affiliate with and like their school community, they have to experience a personal connection, have trust in others, feel safe (Osterman, 2000) and identify with the significance or worth of school (Booker, 2006). Students who feel more embedded in their school community are more likely to exert effort, while those who participate in

school and classroom activities are more likely to develop positive feelings about their school. Students who are engaged and attached to their schools do better academically (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001). Likewise, school communities with a reputation of high achievement breed an atmosphere that emphasizes academic success (Johnson et al., 2001).

Connectedness

Whitlock (2006) conceptualizes the psychological state of belonging as connectedness. Connectedness exists when students are involved in their school community and when students perceive that they and others are cared for, trusted, and respected by the adults who have the power to make decisions (Whitlock, 2006; Libbey, 2004; Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming & Hawkins, 2004). Specifically, a sense of connectedness means that students are motivated to learn and want to do well in school, students perceive that school rules are enforced fairly and consistently, students participate in extracurricular activities, and students like school and feels safe at school (Libbey, 2004).

Students' perceptions of connectedness may vary according to age, level of maturity, race, and socioeconomic status. Whitlock (2006) found that older students were more likely than younger students to perceive lower levels of school connectedness. Students of low socioeconomic status, according to Smerdon (2002), have lower levels of belongingness than other students. In a study conducted by Johnson et al. (2001) pertaining to educational experiences of middle and high school African-American students, levels of school connectedness fluctuated based on the internal and external influences between home and school. Although education improves individual chances

for social mobility for students, schools are less effective for impoverished African-American school children (Davidson, 1996).

Smerdon (2002) uses the term "school membership" to describe connectedness. A co-existence of all three dimensions of school membership – "1) feelings of belonging, 2) commitment to school, and 3) commitments to academic work" (pp. 1-2) – indicates full membership which means that the student has strong positive relationships with peers and teachers, values school and is committed to the academic challenge as well as the overall mission of the school (Smerdon, 2002). Students at the ultimate level of full membership demonstrate higher levels of responsibility and achievement (Nelson & DeBacker, 2008). However, in a study involving $10^{th} – 12^{th}$ grade African American students (Booker, 2006) "higher levels of belongingness did not relate to higher levels of academic performance" (p. 2).

Contrary to full membership, Smerdon (2002) assigns feelings of low membership to marginalized students – those students who do not feel supported and do not perform well academically. Research reveals that students who feel secluded and unsupported become disconnected to the school (Williams, 2003). Low membership or feelings of rejection have been associated with negative behaviors such as substance abuse and dropping out of high school (Syvertsen et al., 2009).

In summarizing a study pertaining to school connectedness, Catalano et al. (2004) found that "school bonding plays a central role as one of the important pro-social socialization domains that inhibit antisocial behavior and promote positive development in childhood adolescence" (p. 252). When students are fully engaged and successful, they are accorded more acceptance and respect from others in the school (Goodenow, 1992).

When students do not feel socially integrated with other students, they may withdraw—skipping classes more frequently and investing less in academic activities (Johnson, Crosnoe & Elder, Jr., 2001).

*School Contex*t

Although school context is inclusive of school connectedness, it also entails school regulations and school facilitation of autonomy (Libbey, 2004). Policies and practices implemented and enforced in schools impacts students' sense of belongingness. Whitlock (2006) shares that small actions and routine policies and practices that may go unnoticed by adults often have great meaning to the students. Conditions relating to the quality of academics, academic expectations, discipline, and the extent to which students have the opportunity to participate in decision making at school are characteristics that affect student behavior and performance. Pierce (2005) indicates that students have learned to "play the game" and "survive" by going along with the policies and practices to get through their school experience. "Minority students educated in majority contexts may regard school as valuable, but negative interactions and experiences with members of the majority group (i.e., low teacher expectations, being the only minority in the class) can prevent feelings of true connection or belonging to the school" (Booker, 2006, p. 3).

<div align="center">Peer Relationships</div>

The Value of Peer Relationships

Liked or disliked, positive or negative, peer relationships are large and powerful network systems in schools. These network systems are vitally important to the development of high school students (Boehm, Schondel, Marlowe & Manke-Mitchell,

1999; Heck & Mahoe, 2006; Smerdon, 2002). Pierce (2005) found peer relationships to be the most significant aspect of school life for students.

Students seek to gain approval from their classroom peers by complying with classroom rules and teacher expectations and establishing connections to other students in their classes (Nelson et al., 2008). "Students who experience a greater sense of acceptance by peers are more likely to be academically engaged and enjoy school and their classes (Osterman, 2000, p. 6; Nelson et al., 2008). Likewise, students who feel respected by their peers are more apt to work harder on academics (Nelson et al., 2008).

Students monitor and evaluate their peers and according to Syvertsen et al. (2009), "students will respond to the risky behavior of others by taking socially responsible actions" (p. 220). Students like all other members of the school community, long for safe school environments and will rely on a mechanism called peer predictability (deLara, 2000) to enhance their sense of safety during the absence of adult supervision. Peer predictability equates to students getting to know one another and becoming familiar with the range of thinking and behaviors of other students. Students feel a sense of safety when they have acquired a strong sense of predictability (deLara, 2000).

The Cultivation of Peer Cultures

The organizational culture and structures of the school setting can contribute to the positive development or the negative development of peer relationships (Hartnett, 2007). "School structures (e.g., grade configurations, size, and ability grouping), institutional processes (e.g., assignments of teachers, scheduling courses, and classroom experiences), and policies (e.g., discipline, suspension, and retention)" (Heck et al., 2006, p. 420) affects the social component of school. Fine (1991) and Mehan's (1997) study (as

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cited in Heck et al., 2006) indicates that students who are not socially integrated into their school community are more likely not to complete high school.

Adler (1999) described peer groups as gangs, cliques, crews, posses, athletes, and preppies. These diverse groups fill the emotional vacuum as students continuously experience loneliness (Adler, 1999). Some schools are so big and the student enrollment is so high that students barely get a chance to be identified. Heck et al. (2006) reported that the school environment can contribute to students' likelihood of success. Additional report findings indicated that the same school features, structures, and processes could also contribute to students' likelihood of failure.

Osterman (2000) suggests that schools are responsible for developing a sense of community among students and encouraging prosocial behaviors rather than antisocial behaviors as the school community is where students vie for acceptance, identity, and survival on a daily basis (Hartnett, 2007). "Being accepted, included, or welcomed leads to positive emotions, such as happiness, elation, contentment, and calm, while being rejected, excluded, or ignored leads to intense negative feelings of anxiety, depression, grief, jealousy, and loneliness" (Osterman, 2000). Students are more likely to be supportive of others members of the school community when they experience support, acceptance, and fair treatment (Osterman, 2000).

Student Relationships with Teachers and Other Staff Members

Student relationships with teachers and other staff members are important as they make a difference in the lives of students (Klem & Connell, 2004) and the dynamics of the school community. "A sense of belonging and membership in the school and a sense

of warm personal connection to teachers and others in the school is essential for the development and maintenance of academic motivation" (Goodenow, 1992, p. 17).

Student-teacher Relationships

The cliché "students do not care how much you know until they know how much you care" rings true as a recent review of literature strongly indicates caring teachers as a valuable feature of student-teacher relationships. Caring, though, is a challenging concept as students' get to assign their meaning to the word. Students of different racial and ethnic groups have varied opinions of caring teachers due to their classroom experiences and academic involvement (Garza, 2008; Johnson, et al., 2001). One caring gesture or mannerism would not necessarily carry the same meaning to all students. "Caring for students should be a purposeful act or, in other words, behavior that is relevant to each student's unique needs" (Garza, 2008, p. 298). In order for care to carry relevance, the teacher must demonstrate care to an individual student in a manner that is understood by the individual student. Garza (2008) explains that teachers should make a conscious effort to know and relate to community of learners and respond to them in a culturally responsive way. Research consistently indicates that students of all cultures are likely to be more engaged in school and have a greater sense of belonging when they think teachers care about them (McNeely & Falci, 2004; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Goodenow, 1992; Klem et al., 2004). According to data collected at Kennebunk High School, effective and caring teacher-student relationships resulted in better academics and "higher levels of students' satisfaction with school" (Beaudoin, 2008, p. 31).

Under the umbrella of care is trust and respect. Students want personal connections with their teachers based on "respect" and "trust" (Whitney et al., 2005).

According Whitney et al. (2005), students want teachers who are approachable and who will listen to what students have to say. Teachers care when they listen to their students (Cauley, Chafin, & Certo, 2001; Garza, 2005), respond to them differently (Garza, 2005) and encourage them to do well (Cauley, et al., 2001). Teachers cannot genuinely express care without first listening to the expressed needs of the students.

Caring teachers are those teachers who provide authentic learning experiences and show interest in helping all students succeed (Cauley, et al., 2001). Authentic questioning is an avenue for students to engage, to be heard and to feel a sense of belonging (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1989).

Beaudoin (2008) strongly supports the students who value caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities to contribute and participate. Beaudoin (2008) argued that teachers should stop telling students what they cannot do but instead encourage them to feel relevant and to become leaders. Giving students a chance to verbally express themselves can be especially beneficial to the students.

Whitlock (2006) found that students evaluate their relationships with teachers according to "perceived teacher willingness to provide time and assistance, emotional availability, the extent to which students feel "visible" to adults, perceived adult willingness to assess youth character based on more than age, academic standing or peer network, perceived adult willingness to give students the benefit of the doubt, and perceived adult tendency to use adult status to unnecessarily exert control over students" (p. 26). Strong, lasting student-teacher relationships cultivates positive experiences and harsh, broken relationships create negative experiences (Smerdon, 2002). Poor student-

teacher relationships may cause students to psychologically and, eventually, physically withdraw from fellow classmates and teachers (Smerdon, 2002).

Relationships with Other Staff Members

Factors such as school size and location, school budget and school program needs determine the number and type of staff members comprised in a school. For this study, campus supervisors, school secretaries and school administrators will be taken into account.

The majority of the literature review relating to school administrators emphasized roles and responsibilities pertaining to principals. However, vice principals or assistant principals, also known as school administrators, often model the behavior and leadership style of the principal. For the sake of this study, the perceptions and characteristics relating to the principal will be encompassed as those of school administrators. School administrators directly and indirectly manage the learning environment and establish relationships with students. Direct involvement consists of classroom visits, monitoring student work, meeting with students, getting to know students, discussing academic progress and problems, publicly and privately providing praise (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). Students perceive administrators who talk with them and get to know them as approachable and influential (Gentilucci et al., 2007). Students perceived administrators who visited classrooms on a regular basis as being interested in learning, teaching, and classroom practices. Students have a tendency to focus on their work more when administrators were present (Gentilucci et al., 2007). School administrators affect student achievement indirectly by "influencing the influencers" rather than influencing the students themselves. Indirect leadership is often a manipulation of school-level

factors such as resources, climate, instructional guidance, communication, and administrator-teacher relationships.

Although no evidence was found to directly support the treatment high school students expect to receive from campus supervisors and office personnel, literature supports students desire to be treated fairly and consistently by all adults in the school. "…good school security is based on trust and positive relationships. The common characteristics of effective and safe schools are strong leadership, a caring faculty, and the involvement of parents and community members, including law enforcement officials" (Ramey, 2004). In a study pertaining to school police and school security in a Hispanic community (Brown & Benedict, 2005), "the majority of the students indicated that that the police and security officers treat students fairly, are polite to students and help keep the schools safe" (p. 272).

Positive affiliation with a school community and bonding to positive adults has shown to increase positive developmental experiences, decrease negative developmental experiences, and buffer the effects of risk (Catalano, et al., 2004, p. 252). "The people who populate and work at the school, the activities the school offers, and the benefits a school grants are all intricately related to how a student feels about school and whether he or she plays an active role in it (Johnson, et al., 2001, p. 4).

<div align="center">Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies</div>

The "highly qualified" teacher as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 sometimes has a different look than the "high quality" teacher defined by high school students. Research does not support students' interest in teacher certification but it does support student expression of teacher qualities. "No matter what policies, curricula,

or governance structures are in place, they are only as effective as the teacher who translate them into daily life of the classroom" (Obama, 2009, p. 156).

Twenty-first century educational practices focus on student learning and student engagement. Klem et al. (2004) explained psychological components of engagement by defining behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Behavior engagement refers to time on task, effort devoted to school work, and ability to focus. Emotional engagement involves positive feelings about completing work and cognitive engagement indicates that students have a strong understanding of information and concepts (Klem et al., 2004). In order to educate the whole child, it is necessary to understand students' feelings and thoughts about learning and what causes them to be engaged (Gentilucci et al., 2007).

Students have first-hand knowledge of what occurs in classrooms. As keen observers and astute interpreters, students have first-hand knowledge of what occurs in classroom and can articulate information pertaining to effective and ineffective school practices (Gentilucci et al., 2007). They can describe those classes they perceive to be interesting or boring.

Research reveals that students are interested in learning. However, they are interested in learning information that is relevant to real-life scenarios and their future career goals (Whitney, 2005; Certo, Cauley, Moxley, & Chafin, 2008). Whitney, (2005) indicates that students take interest in teachers sharing stories about their personal lives and experiences as the student believes this type of sharing will help them with their decision-making skills.

Although students consider teachers who are content strong and knowledgeable about the world and other subjects as good teachers, they rank the teachers who make the curriculum relevant to not only life situations in general but to their individual lives, backgrounds, and cultures (Whitney, 2005; Certo et al., 2008) as more effective. Students perceive teachers who learn about individual students' backgrounds and cultures as caring teachers.

Other teaching strategies or instructional arrangements that students perceive to be examples of good teaching include: games, projects, role play, students teaching each other, and hands-on learning. The most frequently suggested instructional tools cited were "movies or TV, field trips, and group work. These suggestions convey students' wish to be actively involved in their learning, to be moving around and engaged" (Whitney, 2005, p. 34). Students want "clarity on their assignments, homework, class work and what is being covered in class; they want assignments to be individualized to meet students' needs and disabilities; students want teachers to check their work frequently; they want feedback and opportunities to bring up their grades" (Whitney, 2005, p. 32-33). Students want teachers to demonstrate that they know them by differentiating lessons and to make their learning experience fun (Cook-Sather, 2007). Quality teachers create and manage learning environments to enhance the full participation of all students, including those with disabilities by staying calm and implementing effective classroom management techniques (Whitney, 2005).

During a study involving urban high school students, Certo, et al. (2008) found that authentic work, collaborative work, and discussions increased student engagement (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1989). Cook-Sather (2007) supports giving the students an

opportunity to share experiences and perspectives pertaining to curriculum development and instructional methods. School connectedness is encouraged when teachers involve students in cooperative learning activities (Barr & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2007) and respect students for who they are in and out of school (Whitney, 2005).

Klem et al. (2004) revealed that students become more disengaged as they advance through the grade levels. Forty to sixty percent of students become disengaged by the time they reach high school (Klem et al., 2004).

Researchers Mulford et al. (2004) found that schools can influence the way their students perceive school by the way schools organize themselves. Students expect schools to have a clear purpose (Newman, 1992). Student self-concept of ability and school climate were rated as factors that had the most significant effects (Mulford et al., 2004) on student engagement.

Summary

Allowing students to express their views pertaining to educational experiences would inspire them to assume ownership and take more responsibility for educational gains (Sands, Guzman, Stephens & Boggs, 2007). "If students are to invest in themselves in the forms of mastery required by schools, they must perceive the general enterprise of schooling as legitimate, deserving of their effort, and honoring them as respected members (Newman, 1992, p. 19).

As students matriculate through school, attitudes and beliefs are developed from their experiences. Daily occurrences, to include praise and support, accolades, dilemmas and challenges, which they encounter, determines their like or dislike for school. The degree to which they are capable of handling situations or to which they are able to gain

support for challenges may determine whether or not they consider their school experience to be positive or negative.

Factors such as positive peer and teacher relationships, authentic work opposed to busy work, school environment, students level of self-esteem and internal and external factors between home and school influence students' high school experience. These factors or similar factors may also contribute to the like or dislike of the high school experience.

Most decisions pertaining to school are made without the involvement of the student. Legislation, educational agencies and organizations as well as school administration creates policies, procedures, and rules with little input from students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter was to address the research questions that were answered by this study and to describe the procedures, research design, and participants. To gather data for this quantitative, descriptive study, the researcher surveyed ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students in an urban, diverse public high school setting.

Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following overarching research question: What perceptions do high school students have about their high school experience? The following sub-research questions guided the study:

1. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about their sense of belongingness at school?

2. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about respect for others at school?

3. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about their relationships with teachers and other staff members?

4. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about teacher qualities and instructional strategies?

5. Do perceptions of high school students vary by grade, race, gender, and academic program?

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to understand high school students' perceptions of their high school experience. Data were collected from a population of high school

29

students to generalize high school students' perceptions of their high school experience. This research study utilized a quantitative survey design. Versatility, efficiency, and generalizibility were the three primary reasons for the usage of a survey instrument (Creswell, 2003). A rapid turn-around in data collection and the ability to gather the perceptions of the participants anonymously characterized the survey design as the preferred type of data collection method.

The survey consisted of statements relating to: 1) belongingness, 2) peer relationships, 3) relationships with teachers and other staff members, and 4) teacher qualities and instructional strategies (See Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Variables, Research Questions, and Items on Survey

_____

Variable	Research Question	Item on Survey
Belongingness	Descriptive research question #1: What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about their sense of belongingness at school?	See Questions 1, 2, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, and 25: safe; belong; successful; fun; like school; good school; doing best in school; participating in extracurricular
Peer Relationships	Descriptive research question #2: What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about respect for others at school?	See Questions 12, 19, 20, and 22: respect from other students; like for students; friendly students; respect towards other students

Table 3.1 (continued)

Variables, Research Questions, and Items on Survey

Variable	Research Question	Item on Survey
Relationships with Teachers and Other Staff Members	Descriptive research question #3: What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about their teachers and other staff members?	See Questions 8, 9, 10, and 11: fair treatment from teachers, school administrators, campus supervisors, and office staff
Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies	Descriptive research question #4: What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about teacher qualities and instructional strategies?	See Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, 21, 23, 26 – 42 (English/Language Arts), 43 – 59 (Math), 60 – 76 (Science), 77 – 93 (Social Studies), 94 – 110 (Electives) and 111-121: challenging assignments, teacher expectations; work relevant to real life; caring teachers; structure of lessons

Following the retrieval of the surveys, the information gathered was entered into the Predictive Analytics SoftWare (PASW) Statistics 18. This process allowed the researcher to reduce the amount of information into organized patterns. In addition to descriptive statistics, Independent Samples T Tests, and Analysis of Variances (ANOVAs) were used to determine how students differ according to grade levels, race, gender and academic program. The Tukey honestly significant difference comparison test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used for post-hoc analyses.

Population

The population of this study consists of students attending urban public high schools in Georgia.

Participants

The 1,120 participants for this study were high school students from an urban, diverse public high school setting. These participants were males and females in grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve at Castelberta High School. See table 3.2 for total enrollment of selected high school. The racial demographics for the selected high school consisted of 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, 10% Asian, 9% Hispanic, 55% Black/African American, 23% White, and 2% students who categorize themselves as Other.

Table 3.2

Total Enrollment for Selected High School

Grade Level	Total Number by Grade	Number by Gender		Number by Academic Program	
		Males	Females	Resident	Magnet
9th	403	209	194	275	128
10th	399	198	201	276	123
11th	338	157	181	219	119
12th	344	188	156	230	114

Participation in this study required high school students to complete a minor assent form (see Appendix A), obtain parental consent (see Appendix B), and complete a survey (see Appendix C). This survey was utilized to gather, analyze, and understand high school students' perceptions about their high school experience.

Instrumentation

Via email correspondence with Mr. Bradley J. Geise, *Education for the Future's* Questionnaire Service Administrator, the researcher gained permission to use the content of a previously developed and validated *Education for the Future* questionnaire. Bernhardt & Geise (2007), while assisting schools with methods to improve results, established a service of creating "questionnaires to help schools understand their learning environments from the perspectives of students, staff, administrators, and parents". Their questionnaires were "designed from research, revised, and updated on the basis of what teachers, students and parents" (Bernhardt, 2009) indicated as important factors of school operations and services. Based on the research questions and a corresponding literature review, the *Education for the Future* high school student questionnaire was selected and revised to gather perception data from Castelberta High School students pertaining to their perceptions of their high school experience. The original *Education for the Future* questionnaire uses a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to Strongly Agree" to include "Neutral". For the purpose of this study, the survey instrument (see Appendix C) was a four-point Likert-type scale of "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" without the option of "Neutral". The option of "Neutral" was eliminated to remove the chance of students' providing all "Neutral" responses. In addition, the survey instrument included demographical questions relating to student's grade level, gender, race, extracurricular involvement, and academic program. This survey served the purpose of measuring high school students' perceptions about their high school experience. Bernhardt and staff (1991-2007) drafted the initial survey and determined the reliability and validity of the survey by reviewing literature about

effective schools and issues important to students and teachers interviews. The reliability quotient was .97 for the high school student questionnaire. Because the survey was administered in English/Language Arts classrooms during the school day, the researcher expected one hundred percent participation. However, because minor assent forms and parental consent forms had to be obtained, the response rate was less.

Data Collection

After securing permission to conduct this study from the school district and the Institutional Review Board, the researcher hand delivered minor assent forms (see Appendix A) and parental consent forms (see Appendix B) to all of the English/Language Arts teachers at Castelberta High School. All English/Language Arts teachers were asked to distribute a minor assent form and a parental consent form to each of their students. The teachers were asked to tell their students to take the forms home, to have their parents/legal guardians sign the forms, and to return them within three days. Each English/Language Arts teacher was asked to keep a list of students who did not return signed forms in order that those students do not participate in the survey. The teachers were asked to keep the minor assent forms and the parental consent forms until the survey administration.

Following the collection of minor assent forms and parental consent forms, members of the school's journalism staff (students), with the supervision of the classroom teacher, facilitated the administration of the survey to students who returned minor assent forms and parental consent forms during their English/Language Arts classes. Students were asked to return their survey to a large envelope upon completion. The informed minor assent form, the parental consent form, and the survey instrument

were color coded according to grade level to expedite the sorting process. Upon completion of the survey administration, the teachers gave the large envelope (which contained the returned and signed minor assent forms and the parental consent forms) to the journalism teacher. Lastly, the journalism teacher provided all documents relating to the study to the researcher immediately upon completion of the survey administration.

Although data were collected primarily through a survey instrument, demographic information such as grade level, gender, race, extracurricular involvement, and academic program was gathered to compile student profiles and to categorize similarities and differences in students' perceptions about belongingness, peer relationships, relationships with teachers and other staff members, and teacher qualities and instructional strategies.

Data Analysis

After the surveys were completed and returned, the data were processed by using the Predictive Analytics SoftWare (PASW) Statistics 18. Responses to each item on the survey (see Appendix C) was analyzed by using descriptive statistics, Independent Samples T Tests, and Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) to determine how students differ according to grade levels, gender, race, and academic programs. The Tukey honestly significant difference comparison test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used to conduct post-hoc analyses.

Reporting the Data

Information from the surveys was summarized and analyzed to determine high school students' perceptions about their high school experience. The students' perceptions provided insight on the following themes: belongingness, peer relationships, relationships with teachers and other staff members, and teacher qualities and

instructional methods. Findings are reported both in text and table format in Chapter IV. The research questions are answered by the items on the survey instrument. Conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter V.

Summary

This study was quantitative and descriptive in nature. The target population was ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students from an urban, diverse high school setting. A survey instrument was used to target a large population of students and to expedite the turnaround time. The survey instrument was a four-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 'Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". The content of the survey instrument was taken from a previously developed and validated *Education for the Future* questionnaire. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics, Independent Samples T Tests, and ANOVAs. The Tukey honestly significant comparison test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used to conduct post-hoc analyses. Specific findings and expanded data analysis are presented in Chapters IV and V.

CHAPTER IV

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand high school students' perception of their high school experience. The data for this study were gathered by surveying ninth through twelfth grade students attending an urban, diverse public high school. The students responded to questions concerning their perceptions of belongingness, peer relationships, student relationships with teachers and other staff members, and teacher qualities and instructional strategies. Table 4.1 presents a categorical representation of the survey instrument and the number of questions per category.

Table 4.1

Survey Instrument Categories and Number of Items
_____

Survey Instrument Category	Number of Items
Belongingness	8
Peer Relationships	4
Student Relationships with Teachers and Other Staff Members	4
General Perceptions Relating to Instructional Strategies	9
English/Language Arts Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies	17
Math Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies	17
Science Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies	17
Social Studies Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies	17
Elective(s) Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies	17
Preferred Learning Methods	4

Table 4.1 (continued)

Survey Instrument Categories and Number of Questions

_____

Survey Instrument Category	Number of Questions
Real World Readiness	7
Open-ended Questions	2
Demographic Questions	5

_____

Student responses varied from strongly disagree to strongly agree on the quantitative survey items. Two open-ended questions were used to obtain a narrative explanation of student perceptions and as a tool to aid the interpretation of the quantitative survey items. See Appendices H, I, J, and K for a summary of aggregated responses to the open-ended questions. In addition, student demographics varied according to grade level, gender, race, and academic program. Students' involvement extracurricular activity interests also varied.

The data and data analysis are reported in this chapter. Each sub-question is addressed with specific findings related to student perceptions. The findings are reported in narrative form and tables are used to report statistics. The findings for sub-questions 1 – 4 pertain to the group of participants as a whole. The findings for sub-question 5 are reported according to grade, gender, race and academic program. The analysis of the data was done through descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, Independent Samples T Tests, and One-way ANOVAs (Analysis of Variances). The Tukey honestly significant difference test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used to conduct post-hoc analyses.

Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following overarching research question: What perceptions do high school students have about their high school experience? The following sub-questions were addressed:

1. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about their sense of belongingness at school?

2. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about respect for others at school?

3. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about their relationships with teachers and other staff members?

4. What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about teacher qualities and instructional strategies?

5. Do perceptions of high school students vary by grade, race, gender, or academic program?

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Data related to high school students' perceptions of belongingness, peer relationships, student relationships with teachers and other staff members, and teacher qualities and instructional strategies were arranged to form frequency distributions, descriptive statistics, Independent Samples T Tests, and One-way ANOVAs. The 1,120 participants for this study consisted of male and female students in grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve. These students were American Indian-Alaskan Native, Asian, Hispanic, Black or African American, and White students who were either categorized as

high achieving students (magnet) or students in a traditional education program (resident).

The survey response rates varied per grade level as parents and students had to sign consent to participate in this study. In addition, the student response rates to survey items varied as students were able to complete survey items upon their discretion. Surveys were administered while students were in their English/Language Arts (ELA) classes. Descriptive statistics, Independent Samples T Tests and One-way ANOVAs were analyzed according to grade level, race, gender, and academic program to determine variance. The Tukey honestly significant difference test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used to conduct post-hoc analyses.

Sub-Question 1: What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about their sense of belongingness at school?

Findings

The survey included eight items relating to students' sense of belongingness. On a Likert scale that ranged from 1- strongly disagree to 4 - strongly agree, students in grades nine through twelve responded to questions relating to their sense of belongingness at school (see Table 4.2). The majority of the participants (76%) reported that they feel safe at school. However, 24% indicated that they do not feel safe. Similarly, the majority of the students (72%) indicated that they feel as though they belong at their school. Seventy-three percent of students agreed that they feel successful at school. The findings show that students were divided in their opinion about school being fun as most students indicated that school is not fun. Sixty-one percent of the participants disagreed to "This school is fun". However, more than 50% of the participants indicated that they like their

school and 73% of the participants were found to report that their school is a good school.

Sixty-eight percent of the participants reported that they are doing their best in school.

Additionally, 74% of the students indicated that participating in extracurricular activities

is important them.

Table 4.2

Frequency Distributions for Belongingness

_____

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

_____

I feel safe at this school				
Frequency	86	180	658	194
Percent	7.7	16.1	58.8	17.3
I feel like I belong at this school				
Frequency	119	186	573	236
Percent	10.6	16.6	51.2	21.1
I feel successful at school				
Frequency	81	214	605	209
Percent	7.2	19.1	54.0	18.7
This school is fun				
Frequency	325	357	326	109
Percent	29.0	31.9	29.1	9.7
I like this school				
Frequency	202	291	464	152
Percent	18.0	26.0	41.4	13.6

Table 4.2 (continued)

Frequency Distributions for Belongingness

_____

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This is a good school				
Frequency	120	171	585	235
Percent	10.7	15.3	52.2	21.0
I am doing my best in school				
Frequency	85	263	489	269
Percent	7.6	23.5	43.7	24.0
Participating in extracurricular activities is important to me				
Frequency	86	210	377	443
Percent	7.7	18.8	33.7	39.6

_____

Sub-Question 2: What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about respect for others at school?

Findings

The survey included four items relating to students' perceptions of peer relationships. On a Likert scale that ranged from 1-strongly disagree to 4-strongly agree, students in grades nine through twelve responded to questions relating to their perceptions of peer relationships at their school. The frequency distributions and percentages relating to the whole group findings for this sub-question are presented in Table 4.3. Seventy-six percent of the students reported that they feel as though they are

treated fairly by other students. While 84% of the participants indicated that they are

liked by others at the school, only 67% like other students.

Table 4.3

Frequency Distributions for Peer Relationships

_____

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Other students at this school treats me fairly				
Frequency	8. 8	168	654	200
Percent	7.9	15.0	58.4	17.9
I like the students at this school				
Frequency	128	238	598	148
Percent	11.4	21.3	53.4	13.2
Students at this school like me				
Frequency	51	115	689	252
Percent	4.6	10.3	61.5	22.5
Doing well in school makes me feel good about myself				
Frequency	36	55	470	552
Percent	3.2	4.9	42.0	49.3

_____

Sub-Question 3: What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about their relationships with teachers and other staff members?

<u>Findings</u>

The survey included four items relating to students' perceptions of their relationships with teachers and other staff member. On a Likert scale that ranged from 1-strongly disagree to 4-strongly agree, students in grades nine through twelve responded to questions relating to their relationships with teachers and other staff members at their school. Student relationships with teachers and other staff members were analyzed according to students' perceptions of fair treatment from teachers, school administrators, campus supervisors, and office staff (see Table 4.4). Overall, student responses reflect that teachers and other staff members treat students fairly. Thirty-one percent of the students reported unfair treatment from teachers and, similarly, 36% reported unfair treatment from school administration. Although 41% of the participants indicated that they are not treated fairly by campus supervisors, 59% reported that campus supervisors treat them fairly. Nearly 80% of the survey participants reported a level of agreement to "The office staff treats me fairly". Student responses indicate that the office staff does better at treating students fairly when compared to teachers, school administrators, and campus supervisors.

Table 4.4

Frequency Distributions for Student Relationships with Teachers and Other Staff

Members

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My teachers treat me fairly				
Frequency	110	228	620	156
Percent	9.8	20.4	55.4	13.9
My school administrators treat me fairly				
Frequency	177	231	556	147
Percent	15.8	20.6	49.6	13.1
My campus supervisors treat me fairly				
Frequency	235	220	517	141
Percent	21.0	19.6	46.2	12.6
The office staff treats me fairly				
Frequency	101	130	654	230
Percent	9.0	11.6	58.4	20.5

Sub-Question 4: What perceptions do high school students in an urban school setting have about teacher qualities and instructional strategies?

Findings

The survey included nine items relating to students' perceptions about teacher instructional strategies specifically related to student ownership (see Table 4.5). On a

Likert scale that ranged from 1-strongly disagree to 4-strongly agree, students in grades nine through twelve responded to questions relating to their perceptions about teacher instructional strategies related to student ownership. Almost 80% of the students indicated that they feel challenged. However, 61% of the students indicated that they do not feel in charge of what they learn and 62% of the students indicated that they do not have opportunities to choose their own projects. Nearly 70% of the students indicated a level of agreement to "Teachers encourage me to assess the quality of my own work", while more than 30% did not agree with the survey item. While 62% of the students agreed to "This school is preparing me well for what I want to do after high school", 37% disagreed with the survey item. Seventy-six percent of the participants agreed to "The work at this school is challenging" while 24% disagreed with this survey item. A slim margin of 5.3% separated the perceptions of students on "I find what I learn in school to be relevant to real life" as 47% indicated a level of disagreement and 52% indicated a level of agreement. More than 80% of the participants indicated that they like learning while fewer than 20% indicated a level of disagreement. Almost 90% of the students agreed to "Working hard will make me do well in school".

Table 4.5

Frequency Distributions for Instructional Strategies Relating to Student Ownership

_____

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

_____

I feel challenged at this school				
Frequency	59	191	602	258
Percent	5.3	17.1	53.8	23.0
I have opportunities to choose my own projects				
Frequency	254	443	327	87
Percent	22.7	39.6	29.2	7.8
I feel that I am in charge of what I learn				
Frequency	275	407	322	104
Percent	24.6	36.3	28.8	9.3
Teachers encourage me to assess the quality of my own work				
Frequency	100	234	615	160
Percent	8.9	20.9	54.9	14.3
This school is preparing me well for what I want to do after high school				
Frequency	140	270	500	198
Percent	12.5	24.1	44.6	17.7

Table 4.5 (continued)

Frequency Distributions for Instructional Strategies Relating to Student Ownership
_____

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The work at this school is challenging				
Frequency	70	184	632	220
Percent	6.3	16.4	56.4	19.6
I find what I learn in school to be relevant to real life				
Frequency	157	366	468	114
Percent	14.0	32.7	41.8	10.2
I like to learn				
Frequency	63	129	602	320
Percent	5.6	11.5	53.8	28.6
Working hard will make me do well in school				
Frequency	41	90	502	479
Percent	3.7	8.0	44.8	42.8

_____

Table 4.6 presents data related to general teacher qualities and four academic subjects – English/Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, and Social Studies. On a Likert scale that ranged from 1-strongly disagree to 4-strongly agree, students in grades nine through twelve responded to ten questions relating to general teacher qualities and academic subjects.

Survey responses for ELA teacher qualities ranged from a mean score of 2.33 to a mean score of 3.48. Students strongly indicated that ELA teachers have established high standards for learning (84%) and have high expectations for all students. Students reported that ELA teachers are understanding when students have personal problem (79%), help students gain confidence in their ability to learn (78%), care about the students (79%), and give individual attention to students when they need it (81%). Data also reflects that ELA teachers make learning fun and that they are excited about the subject they teach.

According to descriptive data for Math, 87% of the students indicated that "My Math teachers expect students to do their best" and 86% agreed to "My Math teachers expect me to do my best". Additionally, 80% of the students indicated that Math teachers set high standards for learning. Although students indicated some belief that Math teachers are excited about the subject they teach (71%), they do not overwhelmingly believe that their Math teachers make learning fun (48%). While 51% of the students agreed to "My Math teacher knows me well", 49% disagreed to the survey item. And likewise, the percentage of students believing "My Math teacher cares about me" (65%) was greater than the group who did not agree to the survey item (34%).

Students mostly agreed to the Science teachers having high expectations and high learning standards for their classes. More students perceived their Science teachers to know them well (54%), as understanding (70%) and caring teachers (69%) who give them individual attention when they need it (71%) than the students who did not. Seventy-five percent of the students agreed to "My Science teachers are excited about the subject they teach".

Data pertaining to students' perceptions of Social Studies teacher qualities indicates strongest qualities as high teacher expectations. Eighty-nine percent of the students agreed to "My Social Studies teacher expects me to do my best" and 90% agreed to "My Social Studies teacher expects students to do their best". Additionally, 86% of the students reported that Social Studies teachers have high standards for learning. Sixty-five percent of the students indicated that their Social Studies teacher knows them well.

Table 4.6

General Teacher Qualities per Academic Subject

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Survey Item	ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies

_____

Survey Item	ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies
My teacher expects students to do their best				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	7.5	12.5	14.8	9.9
% Agree/Strongly Agree	92.2	86.9	84.5	89.0
My teacher expects me to do my best				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	5.7	13.2	15.0	8.7
% Agree/Strongly Agree	93.8	86.0	83.9	89.9
My teacher is understanding when students have personal problems				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	20.5	38.9	29.4	26.1
% Agree/Strongly Agree	78.7	60.2	69.5	72.4
My teacher sets high standards for learning in his/her class				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	15.0	18.4	26.7	13.0
% Agree/Strongly Agree	84.0	80.2	72.2	85.8

Table 4.6 (continued)

General Teacher Qualities per Academic Subject

_____

Survey Item	ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies
My teacher helps me gain confidence in my ability to learn				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	21.2	34.1	36.7	24.8
% Agree/Strongly Agree	78.2	64.7	62.3	73.7
My teacher knows me well				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	36.7	48.6	44.6	33.2
% Agree/Strongly Agree	62.6	50.6	54.3	65.0
My teacher cares about me				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	20.4	33.8	30.0	25.5
% Agree/Strongly Agree	78.7	65.2	68.8	72.9
My teacher makes learning fun				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	27.0	51.3	39.8	28.9
% Agree/Strongly Agree	72.3	47.8	59.1	69.6
My teacher is excited about the subject he/she teaches				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	14.4	28.3	24.1	16.4
% Agree/Strongly Agree	84.9	70.9	74.8	82.2
My teacher gives me individual attention when I need it				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	18.0	25.8	27.4	22.9
% Agree/Strongly Agree	81.0	73.3	71.4	75.6

_____

The survey included seven questions relating to instructional strategies and four academic areas – English/Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, Social Studies, and Electives (see Table 4.7). On a Likert scale that ranged from 1-strongly disagree to 4-strongly agree, students in grades nine through twelve responded to questions relating to instructional strategies per academic subject

Eighty-one percent of the students reported that whole class discussions are occurring in the ELA classrooms while 67% reported that instructional time is used for small group discussions. The majority of the students (75%) agreed that time is spent listening to the teacher talk in ELA classes. Student perceptions about the usage of books or worksheets during instructional time were almost split as 51% indicated a level of disagreement to the survey item and 49% indicated a level of agreement to the related survey item. More students agreed to time being spent working on projects or research (71%) than those who disagreed (28%). Sixty-five percent of the students find work in the ELA classes as meaningful while 24% do not. Most students disagreed (54%) to using computers in the ELA classes.

Eighty-four percent of the students reported that time is spent listening to the teacher talk in Math classes and 81% indicated that instructional time is spent answering questions from a book or worksheet. The majority of the students disagreed to "In my Math class, time is spent using computers" (85%) and "In my Math class, time is spent working on projects or research" (83%).

According to 81% of the students, time is spent listening to teachers talk in the Science classes. In addition, 65% reported that instructional time is spent answering questions from a book or worksheet. While 72% indicated that time is spent working on

projects or research, only 56% of the students indicated that time is spent doing work that they find meaningful.

Table 4.7

Instructional Strategies per Academic Subject

_____

Survey Item	ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies
In my class, time is spent listening to the teacher talk				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	24.3	16.7	17.9	9.4
% Agree/Strongly Agree	75.3	83.5	81.1	89.1
In my class, time is spent in whole class discussion				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	18.9	60.0	44.4	21.5
% Agree/Strongly Agree	80.6	39.2	54.3	76.7
In my class, time is spent working in small groups				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	32.6	30.0	27.8	34.3
% Agree/Strongly Agree	66.6	69.3	71.0	63.9
In my class, time is spent answering questions from a book or worksheet				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	48.6	18.4	34.1	38.9
% Agree/Strongly Agree	50.9	80.6	65.1	59.2

Table 4.7 (continued)

Instructional Strategies per Academic Subject

_____

Survey Item	ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies
In my class, time is spent working on projects or research				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	28.3	83.0	27.4	32.0
% Agree/Strongly Agree	71.0	16.0	71.5	66.2
In my class, time is spent doing work that I find meaningful				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	34.4	40.6	42.3	28.9
% Agree/Strongly Agree	65.0	58.5	56.5	69.2
In my class, time is spent using computers				
% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	53.9	85.2	49.5	64.4
% Agree/Strongly Agree	45.4	14.0	49.5	34.0

_____

Appendix G presents data related to students' perceptions of their Elective

classes. On a Likert scale that ranged from 1-strongly disagree to 4-strongly agree,

students in grades nine through twelve responded to 17 questions relating to teacher

qualities and instructional strategies and Elective classes. Data pertaining to Electives

was generalized as students were enrolled in a variety of Elective courses. For this study,

courses in Fine Arts, World Languages, Health and Physical Education, and Career

Technology departments, to include Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (JROTC),

were considered as Elective classes. Some students were enrolled in two Electives.

Participants provided responses to survey items according to the course(s) of which they were enrolled. However, after analyzing data involving Elective classes, the researcher questioned the validity of the results as they varied according to students' enrollment in a variety of elective courses. It was determined that data relating to Electives was not specific to any particular course and would not be relevant to this study.

The survey included four questions relating to students' preferred methods of learning. Student responses ranged from 1-strongly disagree to 4-strongly agree. Sixty percent of the students agreed that they learn well when working on projects or research. Seventy-six percent prefers that the teacher lead a discussion with the whole class while 70% prefers working in a small group. Eighty-six percent prefers to work alone (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8

Frequency Distributions for Preferred Learning Methods
_____

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I learn well when I am working on projects or research				
Frequency	182	244	430	243
Percent	16.3	21.8	38.4	21.7
I learn well when the teacher is leading discussion with the whole class				
Frequency	95	156	461	389
Percent	8.5	13.9	41.2	34.7

Table 4.8 (continued)

Frequency Statistics for Preferred Learning Methods

_____

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

_____

I learn well when I
am working in a
small group

Frequency	120	188	496	297
Percent	10.7	16.8	44.3	26.5

I learn well when I
am working by myself

Frequency	105	142	453	400
Percent	9.4	12.7	40.4	35.7

_____

The survey included seven items relating to students' real world readiness experiences. Student responses ranged from 1-strongly disagree to 4-strongly agree. In response to survey items relating to students' level of instructional readiness for real world experiences, 79% of the students indicated readiness in reference to their ability to write, 88% reported readiness in the area of reading, and 72% reported readiness in the area of mathematics. In addition, more than 80% of the students reported instructional readiness for real world experiences in the areas of processing information and learning on their own outside of the classroom (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9

Frequency Distributions for Real World Readiness

_____

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

_____

I feel ready for the real world, with reference to my ability to write				
Frequency	67	147	427	459
Percent	6.0	13.1	38.1	41.0
I feel ready for the real world, with reference to my ability to read				
Frequency	35	76	346	641
Percent	3.1	6.8	30.9	57.2
I feel ready for the real world, with reference to my ability with mathematics				
Frequency	93	199	406	401
Percent	8.3	17.8	36.3	35.8
I feel ready for the real world, with reference to my ability to process information				
Frequency	28	79	416	577
Percent	2.5	7.1	37.1	51.5
I feel ready for the real world, with reference to my public speaking skills				
Frequency	80	204	405	408
Percent	7.1	18.2	36.2	36.4

Table 4.9 (continued)

Frequency Statistics for Real World Readiness

_____

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

_____

I feel ready for the real world, with reference to my technology skills

Frequency	63	152	444	440
Percent	5.6	13.6	39.6	39.3

I feel ready for the real world, with reference to my ability to learn on my own outside of the classroom

Frequency	42	79	361	617
Percent	3.8	7.1	32.2	55.1

_____

Sub-Question 5: Do perceptions of high school students vary by grade, gender, race, or academic program?

<u>Findings</u>

Grade

Ninth grade students reported the strongest sense of belongingness with a mean score of 22.85. All other grade levels indicated similar mean scores. According to the Tukey honestly significant difference test and the Bonferroni adjustment, there was a statistically significant difference between ninth and tenth grade students – (p=.002 and p=.003, respectively) (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

Analysis of Variance for Belongingness and Grade Level

Grade Level	N	Mean	df	p
9th	278	22.8453	3	.005
10th	273	21.4799		
11th	266	21.9850		
12th	205	21.9024		
Total	1022	22.0675		

Based on the ANOVA findings, there was no statistically significant difference found on the variables peer relationships and grade level (see Table 4.11). The Tukey honestly significant difference comparison test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used to conduct the post-hoc comparison tests.

Table 4.11

Analysis of Variance for Peer Relationships and Grade Level

Grade Level	N	Mean	df	p
9th	283	12.1873	3	.360
10th	275	11.8836		
11th	268	11.9328		
12th	212	11.9858		
Total	1038	12.0000		

A grade level difference was found on the variables students' relationships with teachers and other staff members (see Table 4.12). The ninth grade students were found to report statistically significant better relationships with adults than tenth (p=.002) and eleventh grade students (p=.026). The Tukey honestly significant difference test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used to conduct the post-hoc comparison tests.

Table 4.12

Analysis of Variance for Student Relationships with Teachers and Other Staff Members and Grade Level

Grade Level	N	Mean	df	p
9th	286	11.2902	3	.003
10th	276	10.4565		
11th	270	10.6296		
12th	211	10.7820		
Total	1043	10.7958		

The ANOVA findings indicate no statistically significant difference on variables teacher qualities and instructional strategies and grade level (see Table 4.13). However, a Tukey honestly significant difference post hoc analysis indicated a marginal difference between tenth and eleventh grade students (p=.056).

Table 4.13

Analysis of Variance for Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies and Grade Level

Grade Level	N	Mean	df	p
9th	275	24.6255	3	.070
10th	263	23.9810		
11th	263	24.9848		
12th	201	24.7910		
Total	1002	24.5838		

Gender

Based on the findings of the Independent Samples T Test, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances indicated no significant difference was found on belongingness and gender. Similarly, the t-test for Equality of Means indicated no statistically significant difference (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14

Independent Samples T Test for Belongingness and Gender

Gender	N	Mean	t	df	p (2-tailed)
Male	493	22.3773	2.135	1017	.033
Female	526	21.7681			

The Independent Samples T Test, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and the t-test for Equality of Means, indicated no statistically significant difference was found on the variables peer relationships and gender (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15

Independent Samples T Test for Peer Relationships and Gender

Gender	N	Mean	t	df	p (2-tailed)
Male	501	12.0778	1.182	1033	.238
Female	534	11.9195			

The Independent Samples T Test, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and the t-test for Equality of Means, indicated no statistically significant differences for the variables relationships with teachers and other staff members and gender (see Table 4.16).

Table 4.16

Independent Samples T Test for Student Relationships with Teachers and Other Staff Members and Gender

Gender	N	Mean	t	df	p (2-tailed)
Male	502	10.9462	1.623	1038	.105
Female	538	10.6654			

The results from the Independent Samples T Test, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and the t-test for Equality of Means, indicated that there were no statistically

significant differences found on gender and teacher qualities and instructional strategies (see Table 4.17).

Table 4.17

Independent Samples T Test for Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies and Gender

Gender	N	Mean	t	df	p (2-tailed)
Male	478	24.5335	-2.82	998	.778
Female	522	24.6149			

Race

A significant difference was found between the groups for race and belongingness (p=.004) (see Table 4.18). According to post-hoc analysis, the Tukey honestly significant difference test and the Bonferroni adjustment, the Black/African American students were found to report a statistically significant higher sense of belongingness than the students who categorized themselves as Other (p=.001).

Table 4.18

Analysis of Variance for Race and Belongingness

Race	N	Mean	df	p
American Indian/Alaska Native	12	20.6667	3.459	.004
Asian	97	22.1649		
Hispanic	71	22.3662		
Black/African American	483	22.4845		
White	218	21.8807		
Other	138	20.7681		
Total	1019	22.0628		

Based on the ANOVA findings, statistically significant differences were found on peer relationships and race (see Table 4.19). The Black/African American students were found to report statistically significant better peer relationships than the American Indian/Alaska Native students (p=.012) and the group who categorized themselves as Other (p=.009). The Tukey honestly significant difference test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used to conduct the post-hoc comparison tests. Although there was no statistically significant difference between the American Indian/Alaska Native and the Asian students, a post hoc analysis, the Tukey honestly significant difference test, indicated a significant difference of .053.

Table 4.19

Analysis of Variance for Peer Relationships and Race

Race	N	Mean	df	P
American Indian/Alaska Native	12	10.1667	5	.001
Asian	97	12.0206		
Hispanic	71	11.8592		
Black/African American	494	12.2328		
White	222	11.8919		
Other	139	11.5324		
Total	1035	11.9961		

A statistically significant difference was also found between student relationships with teachers and other staff members and race groups (see Table 4.20). The Asian students were found to report statistically significant better relationships with teachers and other staff members than the students who categorized themselves as Other (p=.005), the Black/African American students were found to report statistically significant better relationships with teachers and other staff members than the students who categorized themselves as Other (p=.006), and, likewise, the White students were found to report significantly better relationships with teachers and other staff members than the students who categorized themselves as Other (p=.002). The Tukey honestly significant difference test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used to conduct the post-hoc comparison tests.

Table 4.20

Analysis of Variance for Student Relationships with Teachers and Other Staff Members and Race

Race	N	Mean	df	p
American Indian/Alaska Native	12	10.8333	5	.002
Asian	100	11.2100		
Hispanic	73	10.9315		
Black/African American	491	10.8432		
White	225	11.0356		
Other	139	9.9065		
Total	1040	10.8010		

Based on the ANOVA findings, a statistically significant difference between the race groups was found on teacher qualities and instructional strategies (see Table 4.21). According to Tukey honestly significant difference test and the Bonferroni adjustment, the Black/African American students were found to report more favorable feelings about teacher qualities and instructional strategies than the White students (p=.045) and the students who categorized themselves as Other (p=.000). The Tukey honestly significant difference post hoc analysis indicated a slight difference between Asian students and the students who categorize themselves as Other (.059).

Table 4.21

Analysis of Variance for Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies and Race

Race	N	Mean	df	p
American Indian/Alaska Native	9	23.7778	5	.000
Asian	97	24.9072		
Hispanic	70	24.5286		
Black/African American	473	25.1501		
White	213	24.0704		
Other	138	23.2319		
Total	1000	24.5760		

Academic Program

Based on the findings of the Independent Samples T Test, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, no significant difference was found on belongingness and academic program. However, the t-test for Equality of Means indicated a statistically significant difference (see Table 4.22).

Table 4.22

Independent Samples T Test for Academic Program and Belongingness

Academic Program	N	Mean	T	df	p (2-tailed)
Resident	607	21.5684	-4.215	1014	.000
Magnet	409	22.7873			

Based on t-test for Equality Means, a statistically significant difference was found on the variables peer relationships and academic program (see Table 4.23). Accordingly, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, indicated that students in the magnet program reported statistically significant better peer relationships than students in the resident program (p=.002).

Table 4.23

Independent Samples T Test for Peer Relationships and Academic Program

Academic Program	N	Mean	t	df	p (2-tailed)
Resident	612	11.8023	-3.452	1030	.001
Magnet	420	12.2714			

Based on Independent Samples T Test findings, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances indicated no significant differences for the variable student relationships with teachers and other staff members and academic program. However, the t-test for Equality of Means indicated a statistically significant difference (p=.012) (see Table 4.24). Magnet students reported the higher mean score than resident students for student relationships with teachers and other staff members.

Table 4.24

Independent-Samples T Test for Student Relationships with Teachers and Other Staff

Members and Academic Program

Academic Program	N	Mean	t	df	p (2-tailed)
Resident	618	10.6230	-2.526	1034	.012
Magnet	418	11.0670			

According to Independent Samples T Test findings, the Levene's Test for

Equality of Variances indicated that there were no statistically significant differences

found on academic program and teacher qualities and instructional strategies (.072).

Although the means of the academic programs slightly differ, the t-test for Equality of

Means indicated a statistically significant difference (see Table 4.25). The students in the

magnet program for high achievers indicated more favorable feelings about teacher

qualities and instructional strategies than students in the general instruction program.

Table 4.25

Independent Samples T Test for Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies and

Academic Program

Academic Program	N	Mean	t	df	p (2-tailed)
Resident	589	24.2835	-2.328	995	.020
Magnet	408	24.9657			

Summary

The findings relating to high school students perceptions about their high school experience were presented in this chapter. Data were presented via descriptive statistics, Independent Samples T Tests and One-way Analysis of Variances. Tukey honestly significant difference test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used to conduct post-hoc analysis comparison tests.

The majority of the students reported that they feel safe at school and have a sense of belongingness at their school. The ninth grade students were found to have a higher sense of belongingness than all other students. The Black/African American students reported a greater sense of belongingness than the students who categorized themselves as Other. Although most students like school, data revealed that most of them disagree that school is fun. There was no significant difference found on belongingness and gender nor belongingness and academic programs.

The percentage of students who indicated concerns about safety and the percentage of students who feel unfairly treatment by peers are nearly equivalent. Most students feel liked by their peers. The American Indian/Alaska Native students reported stronger peer relationships than the Black/African American students. The students in the magnet program were found to have better peer relationships than students in the resident program.

Most of the students reported that they received fair treatment from adult staff members. The ninth grade students were found to have better relationships with adults than the tenth grade students. Additionally, the Asian students , the Black/African American students, and the White students reported better relationships with teachers and

other staff members than the students who categorized themselves as Other. There were no significant differences for variables relationships with teachers and other staff members and gender nor relationships with teachers and other staff members and academic programs.

Although most students indicated that they feel challenged, they did not indicate that they feel in charge of what they learn and they did not indicate that they feel as though they have opportunities to choose their own projects. Thirty-eight percent of the students indicated that the school was not preparing them well for life after high school and 46% indicated that they do not find what they learn in school to be relevant to real life. Almost 90% of the students reported that working hard in school will help them do well. There were no significant differences found on variables teacher qualities and instructional strategies and grade levels. However, there were differences for variables teacher qualities and instructional strategies and race. The Black/African American students were found to report more favorable feelings about teacher qualities and instructional strategies than the White students and the students who categorized themselves as Other. Students in the magnet program for high achievers indicated more favorable feelings about teacher qualities and instructional strategies than students in the resident program. There were no significant differences found on gender and academic programs as it relates to teacher qualities and instructional strategies.

Students across the grade levels referenced teachers the most in their responses to the open-ended question relating to "What do you like about school?". Concerning the open-ended question, "What do you wish were different at this school?", the top response

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varied per grade level. Ninth grade students indicated facility, the tenth and eleventh

grade students reported school rules, and the twelfth grade students reported teachers.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

School improvement initiatives are often developed and implemented without the involvement of students. Gathering information directly from the individuals who have firsthand knowledge of classroom instructional practices and who are actually experiencing school on a consistent basis could serve a meaningful purpose. As stated by Cook-Sather (2007, p. 2),

> Consulting students about their experiences in school and their educational needs and listening closely to what they have to say about learning and their experiences of school can provide teachers and administrators with themes that are relevant to and that emerge from the students' own lives; and developing curricula and pedagogical approaches that encounter discriminatory and exclusionary tendencies in education can be not only engaging but transformative for students both personally and politically.

Collecting and analyzing data from high school students about their sense of belongingness, peer relationships, relationships with teachers and other staff members, and teacher qualities and instructional strategies was helpful in understanding high school students' perceptions about their overall high school experience. As a result, the purpose of this study was to understand high school students' perceptions of their high school experience.

Summary

Participants in this study were ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students in an urban, diverse public high school setting. The participants completed a questionnaire

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that consisted of 128 survey items to include 121 quantitative questions, two qualitative questions, and five demographic questions that pertain to students' perceptions regarding belongingness, peer relationships, relationships with teachers and other staff members, and teacher qualities and instructional strategies. The participants completed the survey during their English/Language Arts classes. Data collection lasted for one day. All participants indicated their interest in participating in this study by completing and submitting parent consent forms and student assent forms. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, Independent Samples T Tests, and ANOVAs with PASW 18. The Tukey honestly significant difference test and the Bonferroni adjustment were used to conduct post-hoc analyses.

Analysis of Research Findings

The major findings of this study may be summarized as follows:

1. Although the majority of the students reported that they feel safe at school, 24% indicated that they do not feel safe at school. Eight percent of that 24% strongly disagreed to feeling safe at school.

2. Although most students indicated that they have a sense of belongingness, nearly 30% disagreed to a sense of belongingness.

3. School is not fun to 61% of the students.

4. Almost the same percentage of students agreed to feeling successful, feeling safe at school, and having a sense of belongingness.

5. Seventy-four percent of the students indicated that participating in extracurricular activities is important to them.

6. Only 68% of the students reported that they are doing their best in school.

7. Ninth grade students had a greater sense of belongingness than the tenth grade students. Ninth grade students reported better relationships with teachers and other staff members than the tenth grade students.

8. Although the Black/African American students were found to report significantly better peer relationships than the American Indian/Alaska Native students and the group who categorized themselves as Other, the findings for peer relationships and grade levels were similarly positive.

9. Seventy-six percent of the students feel they are treated fairly by other students leaving 24% to feel as though they are treated unfairly by their peers.

10. Eighty percent of the students believe they are liked by their peers. Only 67% of the students reciprocate the feeling by liking the other students.

11. Students in the magnet program reported better peer relationships than students in the resident program.

12. Most students indicated that teachers and other staff members treat them fairly. However, 31% of the students reported unfair treatment from teachers and 36% of the students reported unfair treatment from school administration. Forty-one percent of the students reported unfair treatment from campus supervisors. Office staff members do the best job at treating students fairly.

13. Most students reported that they feel challenged at school.

14. Most students feel as though the school is preparing them well for life after high school and that what they are learning in school is relevant to real life. However, 37% of the students reported that the school is not preparing them well for what

they want to do after high school and 47% reported that they do not feel that what they are learning in school is relevant to real life.

15. Students reported that they like learning and indicated that they understand that hard work will help them do well in school.

16. Thirty-nine percent of the students in Math classes indicated that teachers are not understanding when students have personal problems. Twenty-nine percent, 26%, and 21% of the students in Science, Social Studies, and ELA, respectively, do not consider teachers to be understanding.

17. The percentage of students who disagreed with "My teacher cares about me" is comparable to the percentage of students who disagreed with "My teacher helps me gain confidence in my ability to learn" in the four academic subjects – ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

18. While 60% of the students indicated that they learn well when working on projects or research, 71% of the students reported doing projects or research in the ELA classes, 16% of the students reported doing projects or research in the Math classes, 72% of the students reported usage of this instructional strategy in the Science classes, and 66% of the students reported doing projects or research during instructional time in Social Studies.

19. Seventy-one percent of the students reported that they learn well when working in a small group. Similarly, 67%, 69%, and 71% of the students in ELA, Math, and Science, respectively, indicated that instructional time is spent working in small groups.

20. Students split 50/50 on their perception of computer usage in the Science classes. Fifty percent agreed to computer usage during Science classes and 50% disagreed to computer usage during Science classes.

21. Eighty-five percent of the students reported no computer usage in the Math classes.

22. The Black/African American students reported more favorable feelings about teacher qualities and instructional strategies than the White students and the students who categorized themselves as Other.

Discussion of the major findings and how they compare to the related literature appears in the next section. While some findings were new, there were some findings that had been discussed previously in the literature and they will also be presented.

Discussion of Research Findings

Belongingness

A sense of belongingness or connectedness means that students are motivated to learn and want to do well in school (Whitlock, 2006; Libbey, 2004; Catalano et al., 2004). Despite school not being fun for 61% of the participants, 72% of the participants indicated a sense of belongingness. Specifically, 76% agreed to feeling safe, 73% agreed to feeling successful, 65% indicated that they like their school, and 68% reported that they are doing their best in school. In concurrence with Whitlock (2006), the youngest and newest members to high school – the ninth graders – reported the strongest level of belongingness. Several students in each grade level indicated an appreciation for diversity (see Appendices H, I, J, and K). In response to the open-ended question relating to "What do you wish were different at this school?", one student wrote "I don't like the way we

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have to say what our race is on tests and important information". Another student's written response was "Less people judging you and your race". Despite the high rate of appreciation for diversity, racism peeked its head as one student's response to the open-ended question "What do you wish were different at the school?" was "More White people".

Similar to a study conducted by Smerdon (2002), the students' indication of feeling successful at school closely resembled their commitment to school. While 73% agreed to feeling successful at school, 68% reported that they are doing their best in school. Success is relative to a student's starting point. A student's level of personal best may be the best that he or she can offer due to situations and circumstances unrelated to instruction.

Involvement in extracurricular activities influences a student's sense of belongingness. Seventy-four percent of the students reported that participating in extracurricular activities is important to them. Students across the grade levels indicated that extracurricular activities were a factor they liked about the school (see Appendices H, I, J, and K).

<u>Peer Relationships</u>

Peer relationships are the most significant aspect of school life for students (Pierce, 2005). However, many students realize, as indicated by one student's response to "What do you wish were different at the school?", "…peers aren't always the nicest to work with". Students are more likely to be supportive of other members of the school community when they experience support, acceptance, and fair treatment (Osterman, 2000). Fair treatment is an indicator of respect. While 76% of the participants indicated

that they are treated fairly by other students, only 64% reported that they like the other students. However, 84% indicated that they are liked by other students.

While the majority of the students feel they are liked by the other students at school, the percentage of students who feel they are not treated fairly by other students is the same as the percentage of students who indicated that they do not feel safe at school. This data implies that the students who feel as though they receive unfair treatment or disrespect from their peers are the same students that have safety concerns. These safety concerns, once again, may relate to bullying. Teachers and school administrators must be attentive to all student behaviors and encourage students to report situations that make them feel unsafe or unfairly treated.

The participants presented a connection between doing well and self-esteem as 91% agreed that doing well in school causes them to feel good about themselves. Students seek to gain approval from classroom peers by complying with rules and teacher expectations (Nelson et al., 2008). Additionally, students who experience a greater sense of acceptance by peers are apt to work harder on academics.

Relationships with Teachers and Other Staff Members

Positive relationships with teachers and others in the school encourage students to do well academically (Goodenow, 1992). However, this study reveals that students do not feel as though their teachers know them very well or care about them. Authentic learning experiences come from caring teachers (Cauley et al., 2001). Students want teachers to care and they want teachers to respect them for who they are. Students of different racial and ethnic groups have varied opinions of caring teachers due to their classroom experiences and academic involvement (Garza, 2008; Johnson et al., 2001). The

American Indian/Alaska Native students, the Asian students, and the Black/African American students had the lowest mean scores for relationships with teachers and other staff members. According to Garza (2008), it is necessary for teachers and other staff members to demonstrate care and consideration to individual students in a manner that is understood by individual students. In this study, 36% of the students reported unfair treatment by school administrators. In the open-ended question relating to "What do you wish were different at the school?", a number of students across the grade levels referenced administrators because of their strictness (see Appendices H, I, J, and K). Students perceive the firmness of school administrators as harsh when rules which they dislike are enforced. However, it is imperative for school administrators to continuously review and revise school rules to ensure student safety.

Instructional Strategies and Teacher Qualities

According to student responses relating to the two open-ended questions, students were divided in their perceptions of teacher qualities and instructional strategies (see Appendices H, I, J, and K). Some students referenced the teachers as good teachers while others indicated that more qualified teachers were needed. The different perspectives of teacher qualities and instructional strategies may be influenced by the diverse student population.

Eighty-four percent of the students reported that they like to learn. Sixty percent of the participants indicated that they prefer working on projects or research, 76% prefer for the teacher to lead a whole-group discussion, 70% prefer working in small groups, and 86% prefer to work alone. Contradictory to current best practices, 84% of the participants indicated that instructional time is spent listening to Math teachers talk, 81%

agreed that instructional time is spent listening to Science teachers talk, and 89% of the students reported that Social Studies class time is occupied by teacher lectures. Students want to learn information that is relevant to life. However, not all students agreed that class time is spent doing work that they consider meaningful. Concerning student's level of readiness for life after high school, students perceived themselves as being ready for the real world in reference to their ability to write (79%), to read (89%), to do math (72%), to process information (89%), to do public speaking (73%), to use technology (79%), and to learn on their own outside of the classroom (87%).

Conclusions

The intent of this study was to understand high school students' perceptions of their high school experience. Major conclusions from the study included (1) although most students feel safe at school, there were a percentage of students who indicated they do not feel safe at school, (2) ninth grade students, the youngest group of students in the school, had a higher level of belongingness and had better relationships with teachers and other staff members than tenth grade students, (3) overall peer relationships in the school were positive; however, 24% of the students indicated that they feel as though they are treated unfairly by their peers, (4) most students reported fair treatment from teachers and other staff members; however, 36% of the students reported unfair treatment by school administrators (5) students do not feel that school is fun, (6) students enjoy learning and understand the significance of hard work, (7) 37% of the students do not feel that school is preparing them well for what they want to do after high school, and (8) students prefer to learn material that is relevant to real-life experiences.

Implications

Several implications can be drawn from this study. The implications should be helpful to teachers, local school administrators, district- and state-level administrators as well as state education departments and boards.

Seventy-six percent of the students indicated that they feel safe, 76% indicated that other students treat them fairly, and 79% indicated that teachers treat them fairly. These statistics imply that students measure their level of safety at school according to their relationships with other students and teachers.

In addition, the data implies that school is not a safety zone for all students. Twenty-four percent of the students in this study reported that they do not feel safe at school. Eight percent of that 24% strongly disagreed to feeling safe at school. This data implies that there are existing concerns relating to safety. The specific concerns are either unknown or unaddressed in order for them to remain on the minds of students. However, concerns relating to safety should not be taken lightly as current measures of bullying is broad and has proven deadly. Teachers, school administrators, and other adults working with students must be trained to work with students so that students will feel comfortable reporting unsafe situations. Students must report what they consider as unsafe. Every instance of a safety concern should be thoroughly and quickly investigated and handled accordingly.

Although students enjoy learning, school is not fun to them. Sixty-one percent of the students indicated that school is not fun to them. This implies that students have learned how to play the game of "school" (Pierce, 2005) and they attend school because of the compulsory attendance law. An additional implication is that students go through

the motion of schooling due to family tradition. Attending and completing school is expected of them and, therefore, they do what is expected. In addition, only 62% of the students indicated that the school is preparing them for what they want to do after high school and 52% indicated that what they learn in school is relevant to life. This implies that the curriculum is not suitable for the career interest of twenty-first century learners. The 82% who like to learn may decline if curriculum and twenty-first century career goals are not synchronized. While 76% found school work to be challenging only 62% indicated that the school was preparing them for their career goals. The challenges presented and the means of preparation may not be aligned.

Students like learning and understand that hard work will make them do well in school. However, they do not always put forth their best effort. Only 68% of the students indicated that they are doing their best in school. The implication of this data is that students settle for mediocre – they do enough to get by. External influences as well as peer pressure may contribute to this compromise.

Assessing students' learning styles prior to instructional preparation and delivery could prove beneficial. The data implies that there is a disconnection between the students' preferred learning methods and the usage of instructional time. However, students' understanding of instructional strategies may be misconstrued as 85% of the students indicated a lack of computer usage in the Math classes. According to the data, few students use calculators in their Math classes.

Ninth grade students were found to have a greater sense of belongingness than tenth grade students. Seemingly, the ninth grade students were embraced by others and felt welcomed as they transitioned into high school. Efforts to assist with the ninth grade

transition were evident. As students attending high school for the first time, the ninth grade students are experiencing a different level of freedom than they did in middle school.

Overall, this study indicates that students are interested in learning and they want to be taught by adults who care and recognize their interests and needs. As much as students are the same, they are different. As each student has his or her individual personality, each group of students has its own unique personality. It is the responsibility of the individuals serving those groups to determine the groups' needs and develop instructional strategies accordingly. Gathering perception data will assist school administrators and teachers with identifying student groups and student needs. Gathering perception data will help drive school improvement decisions.

<div align="center">Dissemination</div>

This study will be beneficial to several groups. These groups include (a) teachers, (b) school administrators, (c) district- and state-level administrators, (d) the instrument creator so they can see how their instrument was used in relation to their own research, (e) school improvement teams, and (f) the Research and Evaluation Department at the local level. The instrument creators are researchers who have conducted similar studies. The student researcher committed to sharing a copy of the study upon completion of the dissertation. In addition, the student researcher committed to providing a copy of the study to the local Research and Evaluation Department as part of the approval process. Some information pertaining to high school students' perceptions will be presented to local faculty and staff members and at a local Principals' meeting.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, conclusions, and implications of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Conduct a study relating to middle school students' perceptions of their middle school experience.

2. Conduct a study relating to elementary school students' perceptions of their elementary school experience.

3. Conduct a study relating to teacher perceptions as they pertain to their teaching duties and responsibilities at the high school level, middle school level, or elementary school level.

4. Investigate high school students' perceptions and how they differ according to race.

5. Investigate high school students' perceptions and how they differ according to grade level.

6. Conduct a study relating to high school students' perceptions about their academic program.

7. Determine student learning profiles and investigate how teachers create lessons to best accommodate the learners.

8. Investigate reasons students consider their school environment safe or unsafe.

9. Determine if teachers take students' perceptions under consideration when planning instruction.

10. Investigate ninth grade students' perceptions of their transition into high school.

11. Investigate reasons school is not fun to high school students.

12. Investigate course options at high school level and determine connections relevant to students' career goals after high school.

This study was intended to gain an understanding of high school students' perceptions of their high school experience. Although it is clear that not all high school students like high school and appreciate their high school experience, the data, for the most part, indicates that high school students' perceive their high school experience as positive and worthwhile.

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APPENDICES

MINOR ASSENT FORM

Hello,

I am Rochelle Lowery, a graduate student at Georgia Southern University, and I am conducting a study on *High School Students' Perceptions of their High School Experience*.

You are being asked to participate in a project that will be used to gather information about high school students' feelings, thoughts and beliefs. If you agree to be part of the project, you will complete a survey. I will also ask you information about your grade level, gender, race and extracurricular involvement. It will take approximately 10-15 minutes for you to complete the survey.

You do not have to complete the survey. You can stop whenever you want and nothing bad will happen. You can refuse to complete the survey even if your parent/legal guardian gave permission for you to complete it.

None of the teachers or other people at your school will see the answers to the questions that are on the survey. All of the answers that you give me will be secured and stored by me until destroyed, and only I will see your answers. We are not going to put your name on the answers that you give us, so no one will be able to know which answers were yours.

If you or your parent/guardian has any questions about this form or the survey, please call me at 770-484-8462 or my Committee Chair, Dr. Linda Arthur, at 912-478-5307. Thank you!

If you understand the information above and want to do the project, please sign your name on the line below:

Yes, I will participate in this project: _____

Child's Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

April 14, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am currently enrolled as a graduate student at Georgia Southern University. As a requirement for my degree, I will be conducting a research project entitled *High School Students' Perceptions of their High School Experience*. The purpose of this research is to assess high school students' perceptions about high school and to, possibly, use collected data for school improvement initiatives. I am requesting your permission to include your child as a participant in this study.

If you give permission, your child will be asked to complete a survey during the week of April 19-23, 2010 in his/her English/Language Arts class. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts for participants in this study. Your child's name and all other personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. The name of your child's school will not be included in the final report. Although there are no personal benefits, your child may reap benefits as they pertain to school improvement initiatives.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child will not be penalized or lose any benefits that he/she is otherwise entitled to if he/she decide that he/she will not participate in this research study.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this research, please complete the enclosed consent form and instruct your child to return it to his/her English/Language Arts teacher as soon as possible. Completion and return of the consent form will indicate permission for your child to participate in the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, please contact me at 678-676-6903 or at ladylowery@yahoo.com. Additional questions or concerns may be directed to Dr. Linda M. Arthur, my Dissertation Committee Chair, at 912-681-0697 (office) or larthur@georgiasouthern.edu.

Thank you, in advance, for allowing your child to participate in this study pertaining to high school students' perceptions of their high school experience. The contribution of their time and opinion is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Rochelle Lowery, EdD. Candidate
Georgia Southern University

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

If you agree to allow your child to participate in the study entitled *High School Students' Perceptions of their High School Experience*, please complete the information below.

_____ _____ _____
Participant's Name (please print)   Participant's Signature   Date

_____ _____ _____
Parent/Guardian's Name (please print)   Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date
(For student participant)   (For student participant)

_____ _____ _____
Researcher's Printed Name   Researcher's Signature   Date

Please return consent form to English/Language Arts teacher as soon as possible. Thank you!

APPENDIX C

Perception Survey for High School Students

The purpose of this survey is to determine what <u>you</u> think about your high school. All information gathered in this study is confidential. Your name will not appear in any research or publication related to this study. The name of your school will not appear in any research or publication related to this study.

Please circle the response that best describes your level of agreement with the following statements. Thank you in advance for your participation.

SD = Strongly Disagree   D = Disagree   A = Agree   A = Strongly Agree

	SD	D	A	SA
1. I feel safe at this school	1	2	3	4
2. I feel like I belong at this school	1	2	3	4
3. I feel challenged at this school	1	2	3	4
4. I have opportunities to choose my own projects	1	2	3	4
5. I feel that I am in charge of what I learn	1	2	3	4
6. Teachers encourage me to assess the quality of my own work	1	2	3	4
7. This school is preparing me well for what I want to do after high school	1	2	3	4
8. My teachers treat me fairly	1	2	3	4
9. My school administrators treat me fairly	1	2	3	4
10. My campus supervisors treat me fairly	1	2	3	4
11. The office staff treats me fairly	1	2	3	4
12. Others students at this school treat me fairly	1	2	3	4
13. The work at this school is challenging	1	2	3	4
14. I find what I learn in school to be relevant to real life	1	2	3	4
15. I feel successful at school	1	2	3	4
16. This school is fun	1	2	3	4
17. I like this school	1	2	3	4
18. This is a good school	1	2	3	4
19. I like the students at this school	1	2	3	4
20. Students at this school like me	1	2	3	4
21. I like to learn	1	2	3	4
22. Doing well in school makes me feel good about myself	1	2	3	4
23. Working hard will make me do well in school	1	2	3	4
24. I am doing my best in school	1	2	3	4
25. Participating in extracurricular activities is important to me	1	2	3	4

My <u>English/Language Arts</u> teacher:

26. expects students to do their best	1	2	3	4
27. expects me to do my best	1	2	3	4
28. is understanding when students have personal problems	1	2	3	4
29. sets high standards for learning in their classes	1	2	3	4
30. helps me gain confidence in my ability to learn	1	2	3	4
31. knows me well	1	2	3	4
32. cares about me	1	2	3	4
33. makes learning fun	1	2	3	4
34. is excited about the subject they teach	1	2	3	4
35. gives me individual attention when I need it	1	2	3	4

In my <u>English/Language Arts</u> class, time is spent:

36. listening to the teacher talk	1	2	3	4
37. in whole class discussions	1	2	3	4
38. working in small groups	1	2	3	4
39. answering questions from a book or worksheet	1	2	3	4
40. working on projects or research	1	2	3	4
41. doing work that I find meaningful	1	2	3	4
42. using computers	1	2	3	4

My <u>Math</u> teacher:

43. expects students to do their best	1	2	3	4
44. expects me to do my best	1	2	3	4
45. is understanding when students have personal problems	1	2	3	4
46. sets high standards for learning in their classes	1	2	3	4
47. helps me gain confidence in my ability to learn	1	2	3	4
48. knows me well	1	2	3	4
49. cares about me	1	2	3	4
50. makes learning fun	1	2	3	4
51. is excited about the subject they teach	1	2	3	4
52. gives me individual attention when I need it	1	2	3	4

In my <u>Math</u> class, time is spent:

53. listening to the teacher talk	1	2	3	4
54. in whole class discussions	1	2	3	4

55. working in small groups	1	2	3	4
56. answering questions from a book or worksheet	1	2	3	4
57. working on projects or research	1	2	3	4
58. doing work that I find meaningful	1	2	3	4
59. using computers	1	2	3	4

My <u>Science</u> teacher:

60. expects students to do their best	1	2	3	4
61. expects me to do my best	1	2	3	4
62. is understanding when students have personal problems	1	2	3	4
63. sets high standards for learning in their classes	1	2	3	4
64. helps me gain confidence in my ability to learn	1	2	3	4
65. knows me well	1	2	3	4
66. cares about me	1	2	3	4
67. makes learning fun	1	2	3	4
68. is excited about the subject they teach	1	2	3	4
69. gives me individual attention when I need it	1	2	3	4

In my <u>Science</u> class, time is spent:

70. listening to the teacher talk	1	2	3	4
71. in whole class discussions	1	2	3	4
72. working in small groups	1	2	3	4
73. answering questions from a book or worksheet	1	2	3	4
74. working on projects or research	1	2	3	4
75. doing work that I find meaningful	1	2	3	4
76. using computers	1	2	3	4

My <u>Social Studies</u> teacher:

77. expects students to do their best	1	2	3	4
78. expects me to do my best	1	2	3	4
79. is understanding when students have personal problems	1	2	3	4
80. sets high standards for learning in their classes	1	2	3	4
81. helps me gain confidence in my ability to learn	1	2	3	4
82. knows me well	1	2	3	4
83. cares about me	1	2	3	4

84. makes learning fun	1	2	3	4
85. is excited about the subject they teach	1	2	3	4
86. gives me individual attention when I need it	1	2	3	4

In my <u>Social Studies</u> class, time is spent:

87. listening to the teacher talk	1	2	3	4
88. in whole class discussions	1	2	3	4
89. working in small groups	1	2	3	4
90. answering questions from a book or worksheet	1	2	3	4
91. working on projects or research	1	2	3	4
92. doing work that I find meaningful	1	2	3	4
93. using computers	1	2	3	4

My <u>Elective</u> class(es) teachers:

94. expect students to do their best	1	2	3	4
95. expect me to do my best	1	2	3	4
96. are understanding when students have personal problems	1	2	3	4
97. set high standards for learning in their classes	1	2	3	4
98. help me gain confidence in my ability to learn	1	2	3	4
99. know me well	1	2	3	4
100. care about me	1	2	3	4
101. make learning fun	1	2	3	4
102. are excited about the subject they teach	1	2	3	4
103. give me individual attention when I need it	1	2	3	4

In my <u>Elective</u> class(es), time is spent:

104. listening to the teacher talk	1	2	3	4
105. in whole class discussions	1	2	3	4
106. working in small groups	1	2	3	4
107. answering questions from a book or worksheet	1	2	3	4
108. working on projects or research	1	2	3	4
109. doing work that I find meaningful	1	2	3	4
110. using computers	1	2	3	4

I learn well when:

111. I am working on projects or research   1   2   3   4

112. the teacher is leading a discussion with the whole class   1   2   3   4

113. I am working in a small group   1   2   3   4

114. I am working by myself   1   2   3   4

I feel ready for the real world, with reference to:

115. my ability to write   1   2   3   4

116. my ability to read   1   2   3   4

117. my ability with mathematics   1   2   3   4

118. my ability to process information   1   2   3   4

119. my public speaking skills   1   2   3   4

120. my technology skills   1   2   3   4

121. my ability to learn on my own outside of a classroom   1   2   3   4

122. **What do you like about this school?**

123. **What do you wish were different at this school?**

Student Demographic Data

Please darken the circle of the response that best describes you. Thank you, again, for your participation.

124. **I am in the:**
  o 9th Grade
  o 10th Grade
  o 11th Grade
  o 12th Grade

125. **I am a:**
  o Male
  o Female

126. **I am:**
  o American Indian/Alaska Native
  o Asian
  o Hispanic
  o Black/African American
  o White
  o Other

127**. I am involved in the following extracurricular activities:**
  o Academic *(i.e., Beta Club, National Honor Society, Spanish Club)*
  o Service Club/Organizations *(i.e., Interact Club, Amnesty Club, Y-Club)*
  o Athletics *(i.e., Cross Country, Basketball, Tennis)*
  o Music *(i.e., Band, Chorus, Orchestra)*
  o Other *(i.e., Men of Distinction, Gay-Straight Alliance, Christians-in-Action)*

128. **I am in the:**
  o Resident Program
  o Magnet Program for High Achievers

APPENDIX D

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Georgia Southern University	
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs	
Institutional Review Board (IRB)	
Phone: 912-478-0843	Veazey Hall 2021
	P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719　　IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

To:　　Rochelle Lowery
　　　　676 Stonemill Manor
　　　　Lithonia, GA 30058

CC:　　Charles E. Patterson
　　　　Associate Vice President for Research

From:　Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
　　　　Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
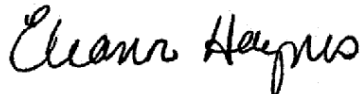　　　　(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date:　April 14, 2010

Subject:　Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

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After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H10316** and titled **"High School Students' Perceptions of their High School Experience"**, it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable. You are authorized to enroll up to **1496** subjects.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study,** within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Haynes

Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer

APPENDIX E

Email Granting Permission to Use Content of Instrument

From: Geise, Brad (BGeise@csuchico.edu)
To: Rochelle Lowery
Date: Mon, August 17, 2009 9:32:27 AM
Subject: Re: Seeking Assistance

Hi Rochelle,

I manage questionnaire services for Education for the Future (with Dr. Bernhardt as exec director). I am authorized to provide you with permission. Please consider this email as permission to use our questionnaires for your dissertation.

Best,

Brad

_____

Bradley J. Geise
Education For The Future
400 West First Street
Chico, CA 95929-0230
http://eff.csuchico.edu
email: bgeise@csuchico.edu
voice: 530-898-4482
fax: 530-898-4484

On 8/17/09 1:05 AM, "Rochelle Lowery" <ladylowery@yahoo.com> wrote:

> Hello Mr. Geise,
> I am working on a dissertation pertaining to high school students perception of high school and would
> like to use a questionnaire from Dr. Victoria Bernhardt's book, *Data Analysis for Schoolwide
> Improvement*. I am seeking assistance in gaining permission or in how to contact Dr. Bernhardt. Please
> provide me with contact information for Dr. Bernhardt or to the person necessary to contact for this
> request. Thank you.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Rochelle Lowery
> 770-757-0821

APPENDIX F

Email Granting Permission to Use The Circle of Shared Leadership Content and Graphic

Tue, September 28, 2010 4:52:54 PM
RE: Request: The Circle of Shared Leadership
From: Carla Roach
        <croach@theinnovationcenter.org>
        View Contact
To: Rochelle Lowery <ladylowery@yahoo.com>
Cc: IC <ic@theinnovationcenter.org>

_____

Hi Rochelle,

Yes, you have our permission to use the Circle of Shared Leadership – please include a reference to the original source. Thanks for contacting us and good luck with your study!

Carla.

From: Rochelle Lowery [mailto:ladylowery@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, September 28, 2010 4:46 PM
To: Carla Roach
Subject: Request: The Circle of Shared Leadership

Hello Carla,
Thank you for taking my call a little while ago. I am Rochelle Lowery -- a student at Georgia Southern University who is working on a study titled "High School Students' Perceptions of their High School Experience". The conceptual framework of my study is shared leadership. While searching the internet for information relating to and a graphic representation of shared leadership, I found The Circle of Shared Leadership. With your written permission, I would like to use the content and graphic representation of The Circle of Shared Leadership for my study. Please confirm your approval by responding to this email. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rochelle Lowery
770-757-0821

Teacher Qualities and Instructional Strategies Relating to Elective(s) Teachers

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My teacher expects students to do their best				
Frequency	108	157	403	429
Percent	9.6	14.0	36.0	38.3
My teacher expects me to do my best				
Frequency	89	149	416	444
Percent	7.9	13.3	37.1	39.6
My teacher is understanding when students have personal problems				
Frequency	142	231	396	326
Percent	12.7	20.6	35.4	29.1
My teacher sets high standards for learning in his/her class				
Frequency	134	247	370	345
Percent	12.0	22.1	33.0	30.8
My teacher helps me gain confidence in my ability to learn				
Frequency	135	268	398	292
Percent	12.1	23.9	35.5	26.1

My teacher knows me well

Frequency	164	285	358	289
Percent	14.6	25.4	32.0	25.8

My teacher cares about me

Frequency	146	224	434	292
Percent	13.0	20.0	38.8	26.1

My teacher makes
learning fun

Frequency	146	226	399	326
Percent	13.0	20.2	35.6	29.1

My teacher is excited
about the subject he/she
teaches

Frequency	120	163	391	419
Percent	10.7	14.6	34.9	37.4

My teacher gives me
individual attention when
I need it

Frequency	164	226	400	303
Percent	14.6	20.2	35.7	27.1

In my Elective(s) class(es),
time is spent listening to the
teacher talk

Frequency	204	246	387	260
Percent	18.2	22.0	34.6	23.2

In my Elective(s) class(es),
time is spent in whole class
discussion

Frequency	261	274	333	230
Percent	23.3	24.5	29.7	20.5

In my Elective(s) class(es),
time is spent working
in small groups

Frequency	234	209	395	257
Percent	20.9	18.7	35.3	22.9

In my Elective(s) class(es),
time is spent answering
questions from a book
or worksheet

Frequency	347	208	320	222
Percent	31.0	18.6	28.6	19.8

In my Elective(s) class(es),
time is spent working on
projects or research

Frequency	275	193	343	284
Percent	24.6	17.2	30.6	25.4

In my Elective(s) class(es),
time is spent doing work
that I find meaningful

Frequency	222	206	364	303
Percent	19.8	18.4	32.5	27.1

In my Elective(s) class(es),
time is spent using computers

Frequency	422	178	255	241
Percent	37.7	15.9	22.8	21.5

_____

9th Grade Participants' Aggregated Open-Ended Responses

What do you like about school?	What do you wish were different at this school?
- Teachers (143) - Extracurricular activities (57) - Friends (42) - Students/people (41) - School Culture (24) - Diversity (28 - Academic programs (15) - Nothing (13) - Freedom (12) - School climate (9) - Lunch (5) - Challenging courses (7) - School schedule (4) - School reputation (4) - School rules (4) - It is a good school (3) - The social aspect (3) - The communications between teachers and students (3) - Career readiness (3) - The way classes are set up (2) - Students' focus on their future (2) - Lunch time (2) - Everything - Library - The way we receive personal attention - Being accepted - Caring counselors - There is not a majority or a minority	- Facility (110) - Lunches (52) - Dress code (32) - More student activities – pep rallies and dances (31) - Campus Supervisors (30) - School rules (19) - Administrators are too strict (10) - Amount of time to eat lunch (9) - Nothing (9) - Everything (6) - Discipline in classrooms (6) - Teachers' demonstration of understanding students (3) - Amount of time between classes (3) - Lunch prices and portion - Library hours - The division between Magnet and Resident programs - Method of recognizing athletic and academic achievement - Teachers' usage of textbook to teach - Students' relationships with counselors

APPENDIX I

10th Grade Participants' Aggregated Open-ended Responses

What do you like about school?	What do you wish were different at this school?
- Teachers (89) - Students/people (50) - Extracurricular activities (43) - Nothing (35) - Academic challenge (25) - Friends (25) - Diversity(24) - School culture (10) - Academic programs (7) - Opportunities to have fun (6) - School climate (6) - School schedule (3) - Students are focused - How the administrators do their jobs - Freedom in the school environment - Students are the main priority	- School rules (107) - Facility (68) - Teachers (65) - Better/healthier lunches (47) - Amount and type of social events (37) - Administrators are too strict (24) - School schedule (17) - Everything (17) - More time for lunch (7) - Course options (4) - Magnet program is too strenuous (3) - More technology (3) - Students would respect students (3) - Racial composition (2)

11th Grade Participants' Aggregated Open-ended Responses

What do you like about school?	What do you wish were different at this school?
- Teachers (52) - Diversity (47) - Nothing (29) - Extracurricular activities (22) - Academic challenge (20) - Friends (14) - Academic programs (14) - School culture (10) - School climate (9) - School reputation (8) - Students (7) - Courses relevant to career choices (6) - School schedule (4) - Courtyard (3) - Friendly front office staff (2) - This is a good school (2) - Administrators (2) - Security (2) - Opportunities to succeed (2) - Counselors - No uniforms - The informative assemblies - Everything - Lunch - Lunch time - College representatives' visits	- School rules (100) - Facility (77) - Teachers (49) - Better/healthier lunches (25) - Amount and type of social events (24) - Administrators are too strict (23) - Everything (19) - Campus supervisors (17) - Student behavior (12) - Course options (11) - School schedule (10) - More time for lunch (5) - Racial composition (2) - Curriculum - Number of students in school

APPENDIX K

12th Grade Participants' Aggregated Open-ended Responses

What do you like about school?	What do you wish were different at this school?
▪ Teachers (81) ▪ Diversity (34) ▪ Academic challenge (32) ▪ Extracurricular activities (22) ▪ Nothing (19) ▪ School climate (14) ▪ Friends (11) ▪ School reputation (11) ▪ School culture (7) ▪ Academic programs (6) ▪ Counselors (5) ▪ Courses relevant to career choices (4) ▪ Friendly auxiliary staff (2) ▪ Administration (2) ▪ School schedule (2) ▪ Courtyard ▪ Everything ▪ School size	▪ Teachers (91) ▪ School rules (68) ▪ Facility (42) ▪ Administrators are too strict (34) ▪ Student's maturity level (16) ▪ Everything (13) ▪ School schedule (5) ▪ Course options (5) ▪ Diversity (3) ▪ Grading system ▪ Available technology ▪ Reward/recognition system for students ▪ Student cliques ▪ Academic program