

INCREASING RETENTION RATES IN THE 8<sup>TH</sup> AND 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADES AS A MEANS  
TO IMPROVE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

by

Codie Lee Lakin

This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Science in Educational Leadership

Ferris State University

School of Education

College of Education and Human Services

May 10, 2014

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Codie Lee Lakin

Has been approved

May 10, 2014

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_, Chair  
\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
\_\_\_\_\_, Member

Supervisory Committee

ACCEPTED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Coordinator, School of Education

## **ABSTRACT**

### **INCREASING RETENTION RATES IN THE 8<sup>TH</sup> AND 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADES AS A MEANS TO IMPROVE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES**

This capstone project for the field of education leadership explores the need of administrators and curriculum developers to explore the creation of intervention curriculum to reduce the percentage of students that suffer an academic setback in the transition from middle school into high school to such a degree that the students consider dropping out of the K-12 education system. The state of Michigan considers a school's graduation rate as part of the official school ranking system and if a school receives a low ranking the risk of the State intervening which could result in elimination of employees, consolidation, or even liquidation of the school district. This project identifies the ways in which an educational leader can create an intervention curriculum that can reduce high school dropout rates and reach students struggling in that transition from middle school to high school through the use of highly researched intervention techniques such as peer mentoring and transitional and orientation programs.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Abraham Lincoln was quoted as saying that “Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in” (Lincoln, 1832). This quote, coupled with a passion for student learning, is why the author of this project is so interested in building a transition curriculum.

Committed educational leaders are greatly needed in the United States as our ranking among the industrial nations in the area of education has been gradually but substantially declining (Gayathri, 2012). During a conversation with my’s administrator upon the subject of beginning a study in educational leadership, that administrator mentioned that the final project for his master’s degree dealt with ensuring the success of freshman at the high school level. His project was well done and constructed in a manner that seemed to warrant further research and implementation. The question that arose from this inquiry asks what can be done at the middle school level to better support high school success.

A student’s time in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades is one of great change in the physiology, mental capacity, maturity level, and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills of the child. At this moment in their educational lives, students are leaving behind pedagogy of

elementary and their own adolescence and transitioning into the high school/college educational format that will dictate their academic goals as emerging adults.

It is at this crucial juncture that a school and its leader should be actively engaged in assisting those students in developing needed skills and preparing them for the rigors of secondary education and a post K-12 life, be that career, community college, university, or the armed forces. However, local, state and federal governments dictate what is perceived as vital for children to be “successful” students. A student being classified as “successful” is a point of contention within the educational system as the state and federal governments attempt to impose a “one size fits all” curriculum to measure “success” and student growth. However, this practice is very flawed as each student has different skills, areas of weakness, possible disabilities, and varied home lives. Regardless of those facts, schools must devise approaches to ensure the standards of the government are met and the students fit into the mold devised by bureaucrats. One such way that schools are judged on their student’s success is the concept of Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is a governmental measure of how successful they deem a school to be and large part of that measure for secondary schools is the graduation rate.

With the graduation rate being a vital part of AYP and meeting or exceeding governmental goals for AYP determining funding for schools and also determining how the school is viewed as a center for learning by its community and neighbors, secondary level school leaders need to focus on increasing graduation rates (or maintaining an already high rate). Thus, realizing the issue that students who are not successful during their freshman year of high school drop out of school at higher rates when compared to the general population (Monrad, 2007), I intend to create a retention curriculum designed

to prepare 8<sup>th</sup> grade students for the transition into the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and provide support to those students once they have become freshman for the purpose of retaining students through graduation.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Foreground Information*

Boosting high school graduation rates is a growing concern to educators. Researchers stress that, although graduation rates have varied little in recent years, the new global economy makes it practically impossible for individuals lacking a high school diploma to earn a living or participate in civic life (Ryan, 2011). As I previously mentioned, a school's success at the secondary level is partially measured by its graduation rate. "Across the United States, a total of 3,128,022 public school students received a high school diploma in 2009–10, resulting in a calculated Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) of 78.2 percent" (Stillwell & Sable, 2013). Specifically in the state of Michigan, the reported statewide, four-year or "on time graduation rate for the Class of 2012 was 76.24 percent an increase from 74.33 percent for the Class of 2011 (Michigan Department of Education, 2013).

#### *Importance of Graduation Rates*

As previously adduced, secondary schools must focus their attention on graduation rates for two reasons. First, a school's primary function is to educate children and prepare them to be successful adults in the workforce. A high school diploma states that they are ready for the next step whatever that may be. Schools realize the impact that

not having a diploma has on their students. Second, for a secondary school to meet the goals of the government and thus be entitled to more funding, graduation rates must be high or progress towards higher rates must be made. “No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires that AYP include a graduation rate based on the percentage of students that receive a regular high school diploma and in the standard number of years with the graduation rate goal of 80%” (Michigan Department of Education, 2012). Although both the federal and state of Michigan graduation rates are relatively high, that is not the case in numerous individual secondary schools. Even those schools who have met AYP should not settle for an 80% graduation rate but strive for as close to 100% as possible.

#### *AYP and Its Correlation to Dropout Rates*

Prior to an educational leader developing a transition curriculum, an investigation as to why students struggle in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and why they drop out of school needs to be undertaken. “In 2000, high school dropouts age 25 and older experienced a 6.4% unemployment rate, compared to 3.5% for those with a high school degree and 1.7% for those with 4-year college degrees” (Neild, Stoner-Eby, & Furstenberg, 2008). Alongside those unemployment numbers, “median annual income for male dropouts in 1999 was \$25,035, compared to \$33,184 for high school graduates and \$52,985 for those with 4-year degrees” (Neild, Stoner-Eby, & Furstenberg, 2008). “One of the strongest predictors of dropout involves two eighth-grade factors: attending school less than 80 percent of the time (e.g., missing at least five weeks of school) and receiving a failing grade in math and/or English during eighth grade” (Kennelly, & Monrad, 2007). Of “8th graders who attended school less than 80 percent of the time, 78 percent became high school dropouts” (Kennelly, & Monrad, 2007), and “Of those 8th graders who failed

mathematics and/or English, 77 percent dropped out of high school” (Kennelly, & Monrad, 2007). The latter statistics concerning achievement in core classes demonstrates that “when students who struggled academically in the middle grades or who might have earned decent grades but were inadequately challenged before high school enter ninth grade, their lack of knowledge and skills finally catches up with them” (Nield, 2009). Thus, in the opinion of the author, the research indicates that being overwhelmed academically while transitioning from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade can increase dropout rates.

Other factors, such as the physiology of the child, cause an increase dropout rates. As students in eighth grade prepare to enter ninth grade, they are experiencing significant physical growth and change and begin to view themselves more negatively and experience an increased need for friendships (Letrello & Miles, 2003,). These changes can overwhelm the coping skills of some students, lower self-esteem, and decrease the motivation to learn (Letrello & Miles, 2003).

One final rationale for the struggles students have with the promotion to high school from middle school is the “transition from one school to another can be challenging for many students and their families, particularly when it involves moving to a different building and losing the familiar routines and long-established social support systems” (Nield, 2009, p.59). For some students, the singular and unsettling act of changing from one school in eighth grade to a new school for 9<sup>th</sup> grade may be a precipitating factor in dropping out (Letrello & Miles, 2003).

The above mentioned factors in both the eighth and ninth grade greatly contribute to a lack of retention in high school and decreased graduation rates. However, even if a student who had struggled in the transition made it to the next level of high school, issues

still remain. “Students who are promoted to tenth grade, but who are off track [as indicated by failed grades], a lack of course credits or a lack of attendance during their ninth-grade gateway year may have already missed the opportunity to get on a graduation track” (National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research, 2007, p.1).

Without the foundational skills required to succeed in high school, access to academic content becomes limited for students moving forward in the secondary system and the credit accrual system that drives the process of high school graduation becomes a difficult obstacle to overcome (Emmett & McGee, 2012). The struggles and absent skills these off-track upperclassmen face will make retention even harder and increase their likelihood of dropping out of school. Thus, “although dropping out indeed may be the culmination of a process with roots in students’ earliest educational experiences, specific points in students’ educational careers where degree completion hangs in the balance and educational trajectories are reshaped have a larger impact” (Neild, Stoner-Eby, & Furstenberg, 2008, p. 558); particularly the 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade transition per the hypothesis of the author, based on the research.

### *The Impact of “dropping out” on the Individual and Society*

Educational leaders strive to improve their school’s annual yearly progress to secure funding for the benefit of the student body and staff, and to showcase how the school is improving. Preventing students from dropping out of school through the use of a transition curriculum is thus vital, but a school has another rationale for preventing students from abandoning their education. Schools foster future citizens. Poorly trained citizens (due to dropping out of school) are less successful; thus is the society as a whole.

“The status dropout rate represents the percentage of 16 through 24 year olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school credential (either a diploma or an equivalency credential such as a General Educational Development [GED] certificate)” (Aud, Hussar, Johnson, Kena & Roth, 2012). Without a diploma or GED, the individual student and the society suffer greatly. “Throughout adolescence, teens make many important decisions, not least of which is the decision whether to persist with formal education. While making these decisions, high school students face forces such as disciplinary policies, employment opportunities, and family responsibilities that may push or pull them out of school” (Stearns, 2006). The school and its staff strive to prevent poor decisions being made, realizing the impact of those poor decisions will have for the foreseeable future on numerous societal levels. Leaving school is particularly harmful for adolescents’ life chances, as this action cuts them off from potentially valuable information, developmental opportunities, and personal assistance (Lee & Burkham, 2003).

“In 2003, 1.1 million 16 to 19-year-olds and 2.4 million 20 to 25-year-olds did not have a high school diploma and were not enrolled in school; most of these youth, at best, are headed for a life of sporadic employment and low wages” (Barton, 2005). “For these “drop outs”, establishing a stable family and raising children who can make it in our society and economy can be problematic, given the long-term decline in the earnings prospects of dropouts and for a very large proportion of these dropouts, their present plight is a harbinger of what is to come” (Barton, 2005). Dropouts are the nation’s next class of nonperforming assets and each year dropouts represent \$320 billion in lost lifetime earning potential (Fields, 2008). “Only four in ten of student “drop outs” 16 to

19-year-olds are employed” (Barton, 2005) and “the difference in lifetime salary for a dropout and a high school graduate is about \$300,000” (Field, 2008) with contributions of \$60,000 less in federal and state income taxes (Monrad, 2007). “In 1964, a high school dropout earned 64 cents for every dollar earned by an individual with at least a high school degree while in 2004, “drop outs” earned only 37 cents for each dollar earned by an individual with more education” (Monrad, 2007).

In a global economy, the single most important issue facing our country is ensuring an educated work force. Citizens lacking a high school education will see it impact their personal income as well as increase social costs (Field, 2005). On such cost is “drop outs” that are single parents who are in a welfare support system and those drain the society and economy as opposed to supporting it (Barton, 2005). In fact, about 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs will require some postsecondary education and thus students who have left the educational system will be in a substantial economic disadvantage (Monrad, 2007). With studies as showing increases in the number of students who aren't graduating, public officials are concerned those numbers will mean rising costs for social programs and prisons, as well as lost tax revenue because of the reduced earnings potential of dropouts (Field, 2008).

“Dropouts are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, including about 75% of state prison inmates” (Fields, 2008). For instance, “estimates indicate that approximately 30 percent of federal inmates, 40 percent of state prison inmates, and 50 percent of persons on death row are high school non-completers” (Monrad, 2007). “Moreover, non-completers are 3.5 times more likely than high school completers to be imprisoned at some point during their lifetime” (Monrad, 2007). Outside

the economic sphere, “drop outs” face health challenges as well, as more education may also improve individuals' health in a causal manner. “The observed link between low schooling levels, and poor health may be due to other factors, such as income, that are correlated with both schooling and health, however poorer health and higher health spending are additional costs that dropouts face” (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).

“Students who drop out may also be less effective at parenting and may participate less often and less effectively in the nation's democratic processes” (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). “However almost certainly the high individual and societal costs associated with dropping out make it very hard to come up with a plausible scenario where the "benefits" of dropping out outweigh the costs” (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). “These lost youth will wander without a map on the edges of the economy and could be at risk of falling prey to alternatives to earning a living in the regular economy” (Barton, 2005). “Without interventions that will change their course, they are likely to father and mother children ill-equipped to do better, thus perpetuating a downward cycle of economic or social failure” (Barton, 2005). These interventions must not be attempted as a “last ditch” attempt to salvage the educational career of a student, but instead must be implemented when the student is most at risk of choosing a path that will lead to dropping out. Thus, a transition curriculum is not only vital to a school striving for AYP but for the outcomes of our students and society as a whole.

#### *The Need for Transition Curriculum*

Thus, a need to develop a transition curriculum for 8<sup>th</sup> graders going into the 9<sup>th</sup> grade is vital for an educational leader at a middle or high school, to ensure higher graduation rates. “Schools across the nation are seeking ways to increase the academic achievement (and prevent the failure) of students-at-risk during the crucial 9th-

grade year” (Fulk, 2003, p.9). “In schools in which transition programs are fully operational, researchers saw a dropout rate of 8%, while schools without transition programs averaged 24%” (National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research, 2007, p. 2) The assertion that successful ninth grade transition programs are built on the foundation of good schooling through the eighth grade is built upon strong research and testimony. More importantly, eighth grade provides the opportunity for a variety of specific activities aimed at enhancing positive motivation about and capabilities for making the ninth grade transition (The Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2013) successful and retention rates throughout high school much greater afterwards. I am a proponent of the concept that “successful transitions are marked by students who feel a sense of connectedness and belonging, who are engaged in classroom learning, and who are able to cope with daily stressors” (The Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2013, p. 2).

### *Mentoring Programs*

A vital part of a transition curriculum is social support due to the fact that “friendships and social networking are really important for middle grades and high school students, particularly as they move to a new school” (Williamston, 2010). A concept that will assist in an 8<sup>th</sup> grades transition into 9<sup>th</sup> grade and beyond is a student mentor. Studies show the positive impact peer to peer relationships can have on students. A program wherein an 8<sup>th</sup> grader would be mentored in both the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 9<sup>th</sup> grade by an 11<sup>th</sup> grade student (trained by the school to mentor) would be very successful if “a very structured program that involved extensive orientation and training, relied on structured activities and a curriculum focused on connectedness, involved parents in the



program and provided extensive support to the high school volunteers” (Herrera, Cooney, Grossman, & McMaken, 2008).

High-school-aged volunteers, chosen to be paired with incoming 8<sup>th</sup> graders, have many strengths as long as those selected as mentors by the school are involved in their schools and outside employment. These mentors also bring to their potential mentees ingredients that could help them relate better than an adult (Herrera, Cooney, Grossman, & McMaken, 2008). Thus as “social interaction has proved to be an important facet of satisfaction with high school, high school students should be trained to facilitate groups at the middle school to discuss concerns with eighth graders and should also become peer mentors to the students when they move to the high school just as they were once mentored” (Letrell & Miles, 2003).

I envision a mentoring program similar to one that is used at a midwestern high school. In this system, a support group of successful upper classmen serve as positive role models and mentors for incoming 9<sup>th</sup>-graders (Fulk, 2003), however the program I design would allow for the mentoring of 8<sup>th</sup> graders as well.

This group of motivated upperclassmen would meet with students in the spring prior to their 8<sup>th</sup> grade and freshman years and provided tours and tips for being successful in high school (Fulk, 2003). “These student leaders also visited each 9<sup>th</sup>-grade homeroom in the fall to share their strategies for studying for semester exams” (Fulk, 2003, p. 23) Tips for planning, time management, and organizing their studies would be shared by the mentors to their mentees (Fulk, 2003). Coinciding and collaborating with the mentoring program would be a tutoring program. I would need to reach out to local universities and/or community colleges and create a partnership that

would provide pre-service education or majors as tutors for students either self-nominated or referred by teachers, parents, or counselors for this extra assistance (Fulk, 2003). Such a program would only bolster the success of the mentoring program as students would not only have a mentor near their peer level encouraging social success but also a mentor/tutor above their peer level for academic success.

### *Transitional Programs*

Mentoring programs make the transition between the middle and high school far smoother but a well-rounded transition curriculum needs much more in the way of student support for the program to succeed. The most successful schools see the transition between the middle grades and high school as a process, not an event (Williamston, 2010). Students that have a successful transition are more likely to achieve in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, to attend regularly, to not drop out of school, and to develop and sustain positive social relationships with peers and with adults (Williamston, 2010).

Some researchers and educational experts insist that the creation of 9<sup>th</sup> grade academies is the answer and I agree that they should be a component of the transition curriculum. Ninth grade academies consist of 9<sup>th</sup> graders being apart from the rest of the high school or the creation of separate stand-alone schools for freshmen (National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research, 2007). As of the 2004-2005 school year, one hundred fifty-four ninth grade only schools were operating (National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research, 2007). There are more than 1,500 9<sup>th</sup> grade academies throughout the United States, as school districts have created them that meet their own specific needs (Styron & Peasant, 2010).

The academy model provides freshmen with a greater sense of security and community by limiting the number of students who enter its hallways (Nield, 2009). “In addition, ninth-grade teachers' close proximity to each other is intended to facilitate communication and problem-solving” (Nield, 2009, p. 65). If the academy model needs to be accepted as the best strategy by the district and the community, one manner in which it can be promoted is through a summer program for incoming ninth graders. School districts offer these types of summer programs intend for them to increase students' math or reading comprehension skills, teach study strategies, orient students and parents to the layout of the school, and enable students and parents to meet high school teachers and classmates (Nield, 2009). They make the transition to high school less disruptive and create supporters of the schools transition program out of the parents.

Some districts also have developed one-day orientation programs for ninth graders or transition supports such as a "buddy system" in which freshmen are mentored by students in the upper grades (Nield, 2009). However, there is little research evidence that these kinds of transition supports, in and of themselves, are able to keep freshmen on track (Nield, 2009).

I am also a proponent of the School Transitional Environmental Program (STEP) which assigns at-risk students to homerooms wherein homeroom teachers provide guidance to students as needed throughout the day (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007). “Using a quasi-experimental design, an evaluation of the program found that STEP participants were much less likely to dropout” (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007, p. 20). However, I would modify the homeroom concept and apply it to all ninth graders and transplant the idea to the middle school as well.

### *Orientation Programs*

I accept that orientation programs by themselves do not keep 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders on track to graduate. However, these interventions are part of a larger transition model and its success. An orientation program that hopes to succeed in keeping students on track to graduate should invite all incoming freshmen and their parents, approximately one week before school starts, to the school for an orientation as they either enter 8<sup>th</sup> or ninth grade (Clark & Hunley, 2007). “During the orientation, the administrators and faculty members greet the students and parents, students are then separated into homerooms where they receive their schedules, take a tour of the building, and rotate through their schedule to meet their teachers and find their classrooms”(Clark & Hunley, 2007, p. 43). “At the end of the day, the students are reassembled and participate in team-building activities with the faculty. They then have an informal evening meal during which the teachers mingle with the new students and their parents to help students ease into the reality of their new grade level” (Clark & Hunley, 2007, p. 43). Evidence indicates that “these initial activities lessen the anxiety parents and students feel and have proven to be invaluable, especially when conferences are needed later on in the school year” (Clark & Hunley, 2007, p. 43).

Another type of orientation program designed for those most at risk of dropping out requires a district to institute a four-week summer orientation class to prepare selected students for the rigors and expectations of high school (Fulk, 2003). “Middle school counselors and principals recommended students for participation based on risk factors observed at the middle school level” (Fulk, 2003, p. 23), thus the curriculum for the program includes instruction on study skills, organization skills, making the right

decisions, using a school planner or organizer, and becoming familiar with their class schedules (Fulk, 2003). “High school administrators and counselors would serve as guest speakers and the students would earn an elective credit upon successful completion of the class” (Fulk, 2003).

### *9<sup>th</sup> Grade Academies Furthered Explored*

The concept of 9<sup>th</sup> grade/freshmen academies, as previously mentioned, can be one aspect of a successful transitional curriculum, but I have some reservations; however the merits of the academy model are worthy of exploration and consideration. The academy concept can be traced back to 1969, when it was created to improve academics and reduce dropout rates by integrating a rigorous academic program with a strong career focus (Styron & Peasant, 2010). “Academies are typically found within a larger school, have small learning communities, incorporate academic and vocational curricula, and have partnerships with community employers” (Styron & Peasant, 2010, p. 4). “Other characteristics of 9th grade academies can include the use of separate buildings, team teaching, and block scheduling” (Styron & Peasant, 2010). Advocates of the freshman/9<sup>th</sup> grade academy model insist that the model is a strategy to respond to the troubling issue of matriculation of students through the 9th-grade year (Emmett & McGee, 2012). “The model requires the structuring of small learning communities within comprehensive high schools” (Emmett & McGee, 2012). “Freshman academies are designed as a two string bow; the academies first provide the personalization to support the social and emotional needs of students during the transition from middle school to high school, and second offer targeted remediation for students who enter high school with academic deficiencies that inhibit access to the curriculum of high school” (Emmett & McGee, 2012).

“A significant factor in some freshman academy models is that students are scheduled heterogeneously into classes; this provides a learning environment where students with different backgrounds, experiences and developmental levels have the opportunity to be part of the learning in a more diverse setting” (Shand, 2013). “Academy classrooms might be clustered together in one wing of a building to ensure student safety and security and create a strong community within the freshman core classes between the freshman and their 9<sup>th</sup> grade teachers” (Shand, 2013, p. 1).

The greatest attribute of the freshmen academy model is that it is not uniform and can be modified to meet the needs of individual schools. For example, the academy model allows for schools to incorporate the aspects of middle school model such as shorter periods and a team approach as a means to eliminate part of the stress of the transitioning from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade (Clark & Hunley, 2007). In this modified academy model, “freshmen are in their four core academic classes with only other freshman as these students have been together throughout middle school” (Clark & Hunley, 2007, p. 43). “Students are also exposed to the same four teachers throughout the school year, allowing them to develop closer relationships with these teachers” (Clark & Hunley, 2007, p. 43). As students experience the familiarity of a middle school approach in their core classes, they are also given the opportunity to become accustomed to high school as during the other classes of the day, students have a chance to interact with upperclassmen and experience a true high school schedule (Clark & Hunley, 2007). “The duality of this modified academy model eases the transition by giving students a familiar setting wide gradually introducing the responsibilities associated with high school” (Clark & Hunley, 2007). If the freshmen academy model is adopted at a

school, then the school needs to “develop a program that begins in the fall of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year and continues through until the conclusion of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade year” (Reents, 2002) similar to the abovementioned modified model.

### *Transition Curriculum Principles*

The aforementioned major components of a transition curriculum are essential to retention success but require principles and initiatives that shape and guide the curriculum to be as impactful as possible. The first principle is providing students and families with accurate and useful information. To accomplish this, an educational leader and his building should “invite parents to participate in a conference with their child and the high school counselor about course options and schedules, tell students and parents the truth about what counts in high school, ask parents to visit the high school with their children in the spring and again in the fall, invite parents to spend an entire day at the high school to help them understand what their child’s life will be like, involve parents in planning transition activities, and connect middle school parents with parents of current high school students” (Williamston, 2010, p. 2).

The second principle is providing social support. A school can do this in several ways that include:

Williamston (2010) stated that “developing lessons for incoming freshmen on how to learn, how to study and how to take tests, focus on personal problem solving and decision making in both middle school and high school, assist students on setting realistic personal and academic goals, invite middle school students to shadow ninth graders, provide specialized eighth and ninth-grade

courses that focus on a multi-year plan for success in high school, and provide every ninth grader with an adult mentor or adviser” (p. 3).

The third principle is supporting students’ academic preparation for high school. This principle is the most important in my mind as academic success leads to confidence which is a large deterrent to dropping out. This principle consists of educational leaders “communicating clearly what students will need to be know in language arts, mathematics and science to do challenging high school work, holding high expectations for students and reviewing the middle grades curriculum and identify ways to add additional rigor and challenge (Williamston, 2010, p. 4). Also, the educational leader will be monitoring ninth grade failure rates to determine what middle grades must do to assure greater high school success, working with students and families to create six-year career development plans, and providing time for teachers from both the middle and high schools, in the same content area, to meet and discuss curricular issues by using data about student success to guide curricular revisions” (Williamston, 2010, p. 4).

The fourth and final principle is working together to support students’ successful transition. For this principle to be implemented in a secondary school, a “Transition Team” consisting of teachers, administrators, parents and students from both schools should be formed (Williamston, 2010, p. 5). “The role of the team is to identify transition needs, develop plans for attending to them, and monitoring their implementation” (Williamston, 2010, p. 5). Usually the first activity of the team is to conduct a needs assessment to gather data about the success of students when they transition to the ninth grade (number taking challenging courses, attendance, failure rates) and using the data to



understand student needs and to identify practices to support student learning (Williamston, 2010).

### *The Role of the Teacher in Transitioning Students*

It would be a foolhardy proposition to leave out the members of an academic community who have the greatest impact on our students, the educators. For any program to function in the manner the educational leader desires, the teachers must have a voice and be a part of the transition curriculum's design and implementation. Most importantly, the teachers at the middle school (particularly the 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers) need to have contact with the secondary teachers so each can "share concerns, as well as relevant student information, instructional strategies, and ideas" (Fulk, 2003).

Faculty members should participate in staff development training designed to address various areas of identified need in transitioning students (Fulk, 2003). Sessions on topics such as improving students' reading and writing skills, providing differentiated instruction, co-teaching, and responding to student diversity can be addressed as well under the umbrella of transition curriculum design (Fulk, 2003). Educational leaders must never forget that the academic team of the district (administration and faculty) needs to work in concert to ensure a transition program is created with the needs of students in mind and to ensure the success of implementing the new curriculum.

### *Final Observations*

"In a broad sense, the task of helping ninth graders to succeed requires the serious efforts of educators at the pre-K through eighth-grade level to prepare students for the academic requirements of ninth grade; it also requires the involvement of parents in the

supervision and support of their children” (Nield, 2009) “But, ultimately, it is high schools that bear the most immediate responsibility for putting in place the curriculum, school organizational features, and strong teachers who will increase a ninth grader's chances of making a good transition to high school” (Nield, 2009, p. 72).

In conclusion, the author firmly believes that for an educational leader and a secondary school to increase retention rates when students enter the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and to decrease the dropout rate at the high school level, the abovementioned techniques must be implemented as a unified curriculum. With such a curriculum, students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade transitioning into the 9<sup>th</sup> grade will be supported for the purpose of maintaining retention rates throughout high school.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Definitions*

To create a successful transition curriculum, the project design must accurately define the terminology of the undertaking. A transition curriculum is an organized program, designed by an educational institute, to serve as an intervention device to assist students in transitioning from one grade level to another as a means to decrease dropout rates. Dropping out is the act taken by students resulting in them leaving the K-12 education system, and thus a dropout is a person who has left that system. For the sake of this project, the term dropout will apply to those students who dropout out of the education system at the high school level. Retention is the educational goal in which schools seek to ensure as many students as possible remain in the K-12 education system to completion.

#### *Purpose*

The purpose of this project is to create a successful transition curriculum to promote success in students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade transitioning into a successful high school career. Such a curriculum will intervene with needed programs to ensure that students finalizing their time in middle school and beginning their educational pursuits in high school will lead to academic success.

## *Goals*

This project seeks to develop a transition curriculum due to the realization that students who are not successful during their freshman year of high school drop out of school at higher rates compared to the general population. Thus, a curriculum that supports students in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade, successfully designed and implemented, will increase retention rates and thus increase a school's graduation rate. This program will include a Middle School/High School Mentoring Program where upperclassmen work with middle school students and freshmen to provide them with a support system to dissuade dropping out as a viable option. A transition class developed for the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade will serve as a homeroom where students will get both the academic and social support necessary for success. The creation of orientation programs provided to students and parents the summer before entering the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade will serve to better familiarize students with their school, teachers, and educational environment. Lastly, each 8<sup>th</sup> grade class will be required to visit the high school near the end of the school year as a pre-orientation measure of familiarization, with the tours being led by the 8<sup>th</sup> graders' upperclassmen mentors.

## *Barriers – Professional*

The major barrier that this project faces is that it cannot be implemented until I receive my degree in educational administration and secure a job as an educational leader. The project thus remains in the hypothetical realm of well-researched intentions, but can only be viably certified as a tool for retention when adapted into a school district's overall curriculum.

### *Barriers – K-12 System*

There are others barriers that will present challenges to a school leader attempting to implement this new curriculum/program. For any new curriculum to be successful, an administrator needs to get the staff to support the change and be trained in how to successfully implement the program. Teachers can be resistant at times to new ideas as the worry is that it will require even more from educators who are already overworked and undercompensated. Seeking parent involvement and input is also necessary and due to apathy, increased work loads due to the most recent recession, and many other reasons parents are less and less available to assist in supporting a new curriculum. In an era where funding to schools is in decline, acquiring the funds necessary to design, train, and implement such a curriculum will present numerous challenges. Finally, creating the needed connectivity between the middle school and high school staff will be a serious undertaking as vertically aligning curriculum and standards is a daunting task and thus creating a transition/intervention curriculum that linked both building will be tedious however necessary it is to student success.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE TRANSITION CURRICULUM

#### *Curriculum Overview*

For an educational leader to successfully intervene in such a manner as to reduce the percentage of high school dropout rates, an intervention curriculum needs to be adopted that consists of several highly researched components. These components are peer mentoring programs, orientation programs, and intervention/transition programs.

#### *Peer Mentoring – 8<sup>th</sup> grade Intervention*

The most vital aspect to a successful transitional and interventionist curriculum is the establishment of a peer-mentoring program. This program will require the input of the middle school principal and counselor and their counterparts at the high school level. The high school intervention and transitional team (the principal and counselor) will select mentors for the upcoming school year from the incoming junior classmen. Contractually, the counselor will need to either have this responsibility added to their job description or be compensated for this additional responsibility. To serve as a mentor, the students must have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA, be involved in a community service activity (either within the school or the community at large), be active in student activities (athletics and/or academics), and be recommended by the mentoring selection committee.

The mentoring selection committee will consist of the high school principal, the counselor, two tenured teachers, one school board member, and the student council president. The committee will be presented prospective candidates selected by the counselor and the merits of each candidate will be debated. Upon the completion of the deliberations, the committee will vote on each candidate. To be selected as a prospective mentor, he/she must receive a super majority approval by the committee. Once the candidates for mentoring have been selected, the counselor will have a meeting with the candidates explaining the program and that they have been selected to participate.

Students that agree to be mentors will be enrolled in a class that upcoming school year called Peer Mentoring and Modeling. The class will have the mentors visiting the middle school three times a week (during middle school lunch/recess) to check in on their mentees in the eighth grade. On the other two days in the week, the mentors will be meeting with the counselor and principal to discuss their progress and be instructed on proper mentoring and modeling theories. The class will require the mentors to log the hours spent with their mentees, keep a journal of their experience, and write a reflection paper at the end of the year expressing what they got out of the class and the impact they had on their mentee. This mentoring and modeling course will be yearlong and upon completion will bestow one elective credit to the mentor. The mentors will be offered the opportunity to continue to work with their mentee during the following school year (the mentee's freshman year) if needed. The mentor has a right to decline the offer of a second year in the program if circumstances do not allow.

At the middle school, the principal and counselor will select the students most at-risk for being unsuccessful in transitioning into high school from the incoming 8<sup>th</sup> grade class. Through the use of standardized testing data, student records, discipline history, and teacher feedback the principal and counselor choose the students to be mentored. Once the students have been selected, a meeting will be held at the school before the school year begins to explain to parents/guardians of the prospective mentees details of the program and how the school believes it will result in greater academic success for the chosen students. Any parents/guardians that did not attend the meeting will be contacted by either the principal or counselor to explain the program in detail before the start of the school year.

During the first week of school, the middle school principal and counselor will meet with the selected 8<sup>th</sup> graders to introduce them to their new mentors, and explain that the mentors will be meeting with them three times a week. On the days in which the mentors are not at the school, the counselor will meet with the mentees to seek input and address any issues. At the end of the school year, the mentees will take a survey that will evaluate their experience in the program. This survey, as well as the testimony of the mentors, will serve as means to make the needed corrections to the program each year.

#### *Peer Mentoring – 9<sup>th</sup> grade intervention*

The second phase of the mentoring program would begin when the 8<sup>th</sup> grade mentees enter the high school as freshmen. The middle school and high school principals and counselor would review student data concerning the mentored incoming freshmen to determine which students need further mentoring. Those students still deemed to be at-risk, using the data previously mentioned that brought them to the attention of the middle



school administrative team, will continue in the program with the same mentors (circumstances allowing). If the mentors of the mentees cannot continue a second year as a mentor, then the mentoring selection committee will be called upon to selected new mentors. As in the previous year, the mentors will meet with their mentees (now 9<sup>th</sup> graders) three times a week and spend the remaining two days meeting with the counselor and principal to discuss their progress and be instructed on proper mentoring and modeling theories through the prism of the course, Peer Mentoring and Modeling 2.0. This course will again bestow an elective credit to the mentor upon course completion. At the end of this second year of mentoring, the soon-to-be sophomore mentees will again take a survey to express their concerns and success with the program. Through the use of student data, the principal and counselor can continue to monitor any students that still remain at-risk for dropping out. (See APPENDIX A)

#### *Orientation Program – 8<sup>th</sup> grade*

The mentoring program is vital as a Response to Intervention (RtI) model that serves the purposes of giving struggling students the needed resources to improve and then maintain success at the later middle school and high school levels. Alongside this RtI mentoring model, the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students transitioning into 8<sup>th</sup> grade (and the following year 8<sup>th</sup> grade students transitioning into 9<sup>th</sup> grade) need to be oriented into the new mindset of the later years of their K-12 education. At the end of the school year, the middle school principal will send home a letter (as well as make calls and send out e-mails) to the parents of the outgoing 7<sup>th</sup> graders, inviting them and their student to an 8<sup>th</sup> grade orientation event that will take place in the middle of July. (See APPENDIX B)

At this July orientation meeting, the principal will provide a light breakfast and students will be given their schedules for the upcoming school year and their new locker assignments and codes. Once this “meet and greet” session has concluded, the principal will gather the parents and students into the cafeteria and/or gym for a presentation. In this presentation (using PowerPoint or Google Presenter), the administrator will explain the significance of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the expectations for 8<sup>th</sup> graders, the intervention/transition course, and introduce them to the Michigan Meriti Curriculum that will determine how and when they graduate from high school. Following the presentation, the principal will allow for a question and answer session. Upon conclusion of the session, the principal will transition into a discovery session where students can examine their new lockers, explore the new school with their new schedule, and meet with the counselor if they have been chosen for the mentoring program. In addition, 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers (those who volunteered) will be on site to answer student and parent questions.

After this lengthy session has ended, the principal will invite students and parents to stay for lunch in order to ask more questions from the staff. This lunch will be optional and parents/guardians may leave with their students if needed. Before leaving, parents and students will be given resource checklists that the teachers of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes have prepared, which list all the resources (calculators, three-ring binders, styluses, etc...) the students will need to have for each of their classes to be successful. The parents and students will also be handed a list containing the e-mail addresses of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers as well as the principal, counselor, and office secretary so that they can ask more questions if needed.

Upon the conclusion of the event, the principal will send out a letter (a physical and digital copy) to the parents who attended. This letter will thank the parents/guardians for attending, remind them of all that was covered during that day, and inform them of the date of the first day of the new school year. Another letter will be sent out to the students and parents that were not able to attend the event that summarizes the day, provides the link to the presentation the principal gave, and requests that the parents and students come in individually to the school before the year begins to pick up resource lists, locker assignments, and schedules.

#### *Orientation Program – 9<sup>th</sup> grade*

The orientation program that will be given to the 8<sup>th</sup> graders transitioning into 9<sup>th</sup> grade will be similar to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade orientation program, but with a few select and needed differences. I view both orientation programs as vital to the success of students transitioning into high school and completing the journey to graduation. However, in my opinion, the transition from 8<sup>th</sup> grader to freshman is the pivotal moment of transition in the K-12 system and deserves extra support and resources.

Upon the completion of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students and parents will receive a letter (physical copy as well digital) from the high school principal that does not only invite them to the high school for freshman orientation, but begins by congratulating the family on the wondrous milestone of moving from middle school to high school. The parent/s and student need to be encouraged and given sense of the importance of this transition. At the orientation meeting, there will be a “meet and greet” session followed by a presentation by the high school principal.

The presentation given by the high school principal will be nearly identical to the one given by the middle school principal at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade orientation program, but with a greater emphasis on the Michigan Merit Curriculum, the freshman version of the intervention/transition course, and the other resources available at the school to promote student success (the mentoring program, after-school tutoring, etc.). A full tour of the high school will be added to the day's itinerary as these students have a brand new building to familiarize themselves with and the more exposure to the layout of the building now will reduce many of the first day issues that may arise. What also makes this orientation program unique is that alongside the principal, counselor, and teachers (who instruct 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes) being present during the lunch session, the peer mentors who have chosen to maintain that role will be at the lunch to catch up with their mentee and discuss their continued relationship during the upcoming school year. As with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade orientation, a thank you letter to the parents that attended will be sent as well as a letter to the parents who did not attend that indicates what they should do to prepare their student for the upcoming transition to high school.

#### *Intervention/Transition Program – 8<sup>th</sup> grade*

The final piece to my concept of a transition/intervention curriculum is the transition program that students in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade will participate in throughout those two vital years of their K-12 careers.

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade transition program will consist of the creation of a course that all 8<sup>th</sup> graders will take: Preparation for High School. This course will meet every day (this program is ideal for schools that implement a 6 or 7 period day with classes ranging from 50 – 60 minutes in length) and would be the final class 8<sup>th</sup> graders have before being

dismissed for lunch. On Mondays and Fridays, the students would be instructed on how to be successful during high school in order to ensure graduation and success as an adult by the classroom teachers, the administrator, the counselor, and guest speakers. Topics to be covered would include: note taking skills, the importance of attendance, the need to complete homework, seeking help from teachers, the graduation requirements of high school, and seeking out a career pathway as well as any other topics deemed necessary by the instructors of the class, the counselor, and administrator. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the 8<sup>th</sup> graders would be allowed to use the class period as a study hall, in which they can work on homework, meet with groups to work on projects, and complete make-up tests.

On Wednesdays, students will participate in a class structure based on the “Genius Hour Concept.” This model allows students to explore their own passions and encourages creativity in the classroom (Kesler, 2013). Utilizing the “Genius Hour Concept” on Wednesdays will allow the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students a choice in what they learn once a week. Upon selection of a topic of interest, these students are then challenged to devise a project over what they want to learn about said selected topic (Kesler, 2013). They will be given several weeks on Wednesdays to research the topic before they start creating a product that will be shared with the class. These “Genius Hour” sessions will limit deadlines and encourage creativity as the teacher facilitates the student projects to ensure that they are on task (Kesler, 2013). The students will complete several projects throughout the school year, while honing collaborative and critical thinking skills.

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade students that have high school mentors will be able to meet with them outside of the lunch setting once a month on either a Tuesday or Thursday study room session. This ensures the connectivity of the components of the intervention/transition curriculum.

*Intervention/Transition Program – 9<sup>th</sup> grade*

The freshmen intervention/transition course designated, Life Long Learning (L<sup>3</sup>), will be very similar to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade course with a few minor additions. Mondays (no longer Mondays and Fridays) will still have students being instructed in needed skills for success in high school and life after K-12 education. Tuesdays and Thursdays will remain study hall sessions, and Wednesdays will preserve the “Genius Hour” model, but Fridays will be different.

On Fridays, freshmen will be divided into two groups. One group will consist of students who have academic gaps in one or more of the four core subjects. The other group will consist of the students with few to no gaps. The “gap” group will receive support from the paraprofessionals and special education teachers to reduce and possibly eliminate these academic gaps. The reduction and/or elimination of these gaps will result in these students becoming more successful and not succumbing to the feeling of being too far behind or “stupid” to make it through high school. The non-gap group will be provided with time to research colleges, career pathways, further “Genius Hour” work, and participate in weekly book clubs. A travesty in education in the United States, in my opinion, is the lack of support and encouragement the education system gives to our gifted and talented students. Fridays would be the day to give that extra attention to those gifted 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. (See APPENDIX C)

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### *Implementation Process*

Although, this intervention/transitional curriculum has been thoroughly researched and designed, the process to implement such a curriculum will be long and arduous. However, I stand by this curriculum proposal and believe that the process to have it implemented will be worth any effort as this curriculum will do much in improving high school retention rates from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade to graduation.

An effective school leader will need to follow several steps to ensure this curriculum is adopted. To begin with, he will need to present it to his supervisor (most likely the superintendent) and argue the merits of adoption. Once the supervisor is in favor of the curriculum, a presentation to the board of education will be necessary where they can hear the details and ask needed questions. The academic staff of both the middle school and high school will also need the curriculum presented to them as well as be given the opportunity to ask questions and suggest modifications to accommodate the student population. With these groups of stakeholders persuaded to support the curriculum, the school leader will need to draw out his interpretation of the curriculum (that meets the needs of the student population) so as to have the board of education place its adoption on their agenda to be approved. As an act of good will, the school leader can allow for the teachers' union to vote to approve the curriculum, but this is only suggested if the indicators suggest the staff by a majority support the measure.

This curriculum should be adopted during the beginning of a school year with the intention of the curriculum be implemented during the subsequent school year. Upon adoption, the school leader should host an event where parents and community members can be introduced to the curriculum and instructed on how it will benefit their individual student(s) and the school community as whole.

### *Final Thoughts*

I set out to create a master level project that would not only earn my desired degree in Educational Leadership, but more importantly serve as a functional solution to a problem that is present in education today. There are few issues (if there are any) in education more important than helping our students succeed in high school and thus graduate. The world that awaits the high school dropout is one filled with hardships (both socially and economically). These hardships can be avoided if we as an educational community are bold and research and create ideas, proposals, and curriculum that address the needs of students, and take the necessary action to implement them. To quote the American author and poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson, “what lies behind us, and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us.” We as educators must strive to use the passion we have for students and learning to never settle for good enough, but to take on the Goliath problems in education with grit and determination so that our students have a future and a purpose for the betterment of themselves and our society.



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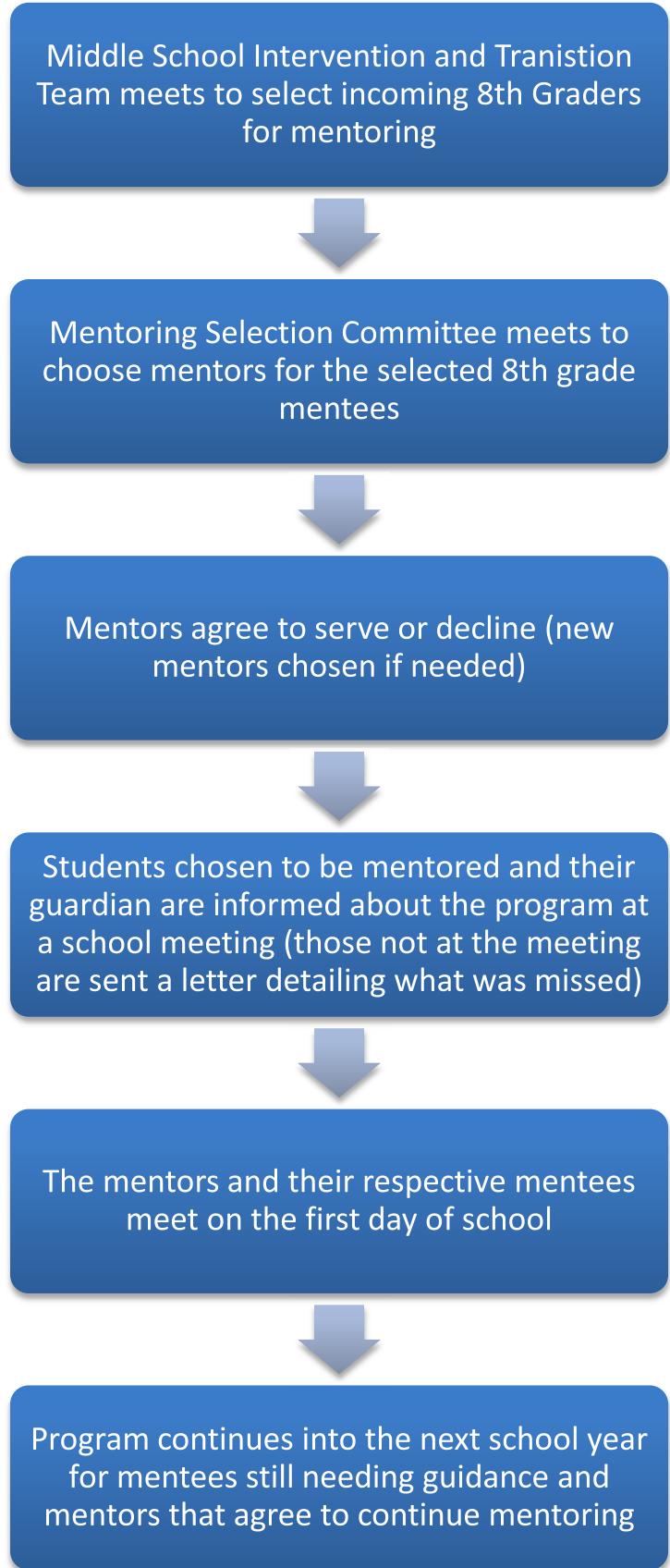
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APPENDIX A

MENTORING PROGRAM FLOW CHART



APPENDIX B

8<sup>th</sup> GRADE ORIENTATION LETTER



Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

On behalf of the entire middle school staff, we welcome all returning students, for their final year in middle school. We have proud traditions and we invite everyone to be an integral part of our orientation program for 8<sup>th</sup> grade and as we look forward to the transition to high school. We have an extraordinary school year planned and we look forward to being a part of it.

Our school is committed to providing quality learning for every student, every day. As a collective team of parents, students, staff, and community leaders working collaboratively on behalf of our children, we can ensure that all students learn at high levels and that all students develop their talents, gifts, and passion. It is our collective goal to equip students with college and career readiness skills to successfully pursue their post-secondary aspirations.

As we prepare for the new school year, all parents, guardians, and students are expected to attend the registration/orientation process. Greater success is experienced when you know what to expect and when you are prepared. Therefore, our staff has developed an informative orientation program that will help each student and family get ready for a successful school year, along with providing the enclosed documents to guide you through the preparation process.

<b>Welcome and Snacks</b>	Schedules and locker assignments given out.	Cafeteria @ 8:00 am – 8:30am
<b>8<sup>th</sup> grade is Important - Presentation</b>	The middle school principal will show the 8 <sup>th</sup> graders and parents a presentation about how to succeed in 8 <sup>th</sup> grade and the upcoming transition into high school.	Cafeteria @ 8:30 am – 9:30 am
<b>Q &amp; A Session</b>	The principal and counselor answer any questions from students and/or guardians	Cafeteria @ 9:30 am – 10:00 am
<b>Discovery Session</b>	Students and guardians allowed to visit lockers, classrooms, meet with principal, meet with counselor concerning mentoring program, and ask more questions.	Middle School @ 10:00 am– 11:30 am
<b>Lunch</b>	Lunch for the students, guardians, and school staff provided.	Cafeteria @ 11:30 am – 12:30 pm

Our school is a wonderful place to attend school, to learn, to participate in academic, athletic, artistic and extracurricular opportunities, to volunteer, to collaborate with others, to explore dreams, to fulfill goals, and to maximize your potential. It is our hope that you get involved and become an active team member of our learning community. We look forward to seeing you at orientation!

Sincerely,

The middle school administration team  
(this letter was modified from a letter used by Oak Park High School in Michigan)

APPENDIX C

9<sup>th</sup> GRADE SAMPLE SCHOOL SCHEDULE WITH RI COURSE

<u>Period</u>	<u>Class Title</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>						
1	Core Class/Elective	8:20 – 9:12 am						
2	Core Class/Elective	9:17 – 10:09 am						
3	Life Long Learning (L <sup>3</sup> )	10:14 – 11:06 am						
4	Core Class/Elective	11:11 – 12:38 am						
		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Lunch A</th> <th>Lunch B</th> <th>Lunch C</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>11:06 – 11: 34</td> <td>11:38 – 12: 06</td> <td>12:10 – 12: 38</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Lunch A	Lunch B	Lunch C	11:06 – 11: 34	11:38 – 12: 06	12:10 – 12: 38
		Lunch A	Lunch B	Lunch C				
11:06 – 11: 34	11:38 – 12: 06	12:10 – 12: 38						
5	Core Class/Elective	12:43 – 1:35 pm						
6	Core Class/Elective	1:40 – 2:32 pm						
7	Core Class/Elective	2:37 – 3:30 pm						

APPENDIX D

TRANSITION/INTERVENTION CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

<u>Year</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Result</u>
<b>1</b>	Middle School and High School Administrative Teams Meet	Meetings take place during the summer and the intervention/transition curriculum is developed
	Intervention/transition curriculum presented to staff	Staff allowed to ask questions and suggest improvements and additions to curriculum
	Middle and High School Admin Teams present curriculum to board of education	Board members ask the team questions and make suggestions for improvement. The board also agrees to place the implementation of the curriculum during the next school year as an action item at the next meeting
	Board of Education meets with curriculum implementation as action item	The board approves implementation for the next school year
	Middle and high school staff are trained during professional development sessions over the new curriculum	Staff are prepared to begin implementation of the curriculum next school year at the end of scheduled training sessions (around May – mid-June)
	Admin teams prepare for 8 <sup>th</sup> grade orientation program in the summer	8 <sup>th</sup> grade orientation takes place in June/July

	Middle school admin team meets to discuss the at-risk students coming into the 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	Several incoming 8 <sup>th</sup> graders chosen to be mentees
	Mentoring Selection Committee (MSC) is composed at the high school level	The committee selects several incoming 11 <sup>th</sup> graders deemed suitable to serve as mentors
2	New school year begins	Intervention/transition curriculum begins implementation
	Mentors and mentees meet throughout the school year	Mentors keep track of the progress of mentees and assist them in developing better academic skills
	8 <sup>th</sup> graders work through a "Preparation to High School" course	At the end of the school year, the course should have better prepared the 8 <sup>th</sup> graders for the challenges of high school
	High school admin team meets to plan for the first 9 <sup>th</sup> grade orientation program	Parents are notified via letter and the program take place that following July/August
	High school and middle school staff and administrators meet near the end of the school year to discuss the first year of curriculum implementation	Successes and setback are noted and changes are made as necessary by admin team

	High school admin team discusses with middle school admin team the progress of the mentees	The teams decide which now incoming freshmen need to remain in the mentoring program
	Mentoring Selection Committee (MSC) is composed at the high school level	Mentors are chosen for the new 8 <sup>th</sup> graders for next year and mentors are asked to remain with the incoming freshmen selected for continued assistance
<b>3</b>	New school year begins	Intervention/transition curriculum begins implementation at the high school and moves into its second year at the middle school.
	Mentors and mentees meet throughout the school year at both the high school and middle school	Mentors keep track of the progress of mentees and assist them in developing better academic skills
	8 <sup>th</sup> graders work through a “Life Long Learning” course	The freshmen receive continued support in needed student skills, time with their mentors, and
	The admin teams as well as staff from both middle and high school meet at the end of the year	The intervention/transition curriculum is discussed after a complete two-year implementation cycle. The decision is made if the program is to be maintained, changed, or eliminated.