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Gifted Students' Perceptions of High School Transition

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

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Abstract

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This study examined the perceptions of gifted middle school students who attended one of two middle school gifted service options as they transitioned into high school. Gifted middle school students from either a center-based gifted service option or a school-based gifted service option from middle schools in a suburban district in Central Virginia participated in the study. Participants who had completed three consecutive years within the gifted service option were purposively selected for the study. Students completed a pre-transition survey at the end of their eighth grade year and a post-transition survey early in their ninth grade year. The survey asked students to identify their high school program choice and provide a reason for their choice in order to establish high school program choice trends among the different gifted service options. The surveys also assessed the differences in the students' perceptions of the transition from middle school into the chosen high school as it pertains to academic, organizational, and social constructs of the high school program. Students from the center-based gifted

program were more likely to choose to attend one of the regional Governor's schools, and chose to do so because of personal interest and the perception of academic rigor. The students from the school-based gifted service options were more likely to choose to attend one of the district's specialty centers, and chose to do so because of personal interest and parental encouragement. Prior to transitioning into high school, both the center-based gifted and the school based gifted students had high perceptions of the grades they earned. However, after transitioning into high school, only the center-based gifted students continued to have a high perception of grades earned. Prior to the transition into high school the center-based gifted students had higher perceptions of the academic, organizational, and social constructs. Differences were not found among the post-transition perceptions of the academic, organizational, and social constructs between the two gifted middle school groups; however, the extremely small sample size of the post-transition survey may have impacted these results.

Chapter 1

Introduction

School districts across the state of Virginia comply with federal and state mandates that direct public school systems to provide distinct learning opportunities for academically gifted students (NCLB Act of 2001; VA Plan for Gifted, 1996). These learning opportunities provided to gifted students come in several formats and classroom organization, all of which constitute the service option that a district utilizes to provide to meet the gifted students' extended learning opportunity (VA Plan for Gifted, 1996). The *VA Plan for the Gifted* defines nine accepted service options from which public schools can choose. These nine service options are: special classes provided on a part-time basis, differentiation in the regular classroom, honors or advanced level courses, full-time classes (center- or school-based), seminars and special workshops, mentorships, independent study, counseling sessions, or access to secondary-level specialized programs such as the Governor's Schools (VA Plan for Gifted, 1996).

While federal and state educational agencies have recognized that gifted students require instruction that is different than general education students, these governing agencies do not designate which method of service option is the best service option for meeting gifted students' needs. According to both the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and the *VA Plan for the Gifted* (1996), determining which method of service options to provide is left to the discretion of the local school district. The legislative policies established by federal and state agencies address the needs of gifted students, and provide local agencies with limited and vague direction as to how to best support these students.

National organizations, such as the National Association for Gifted Children, advocate for the improvement of gifted instruction, believe that the drive for proficiency among underachieving students has placed the educational needs of our gifted students at risk, and minimize the focus on determining the best service options and funding for gifted students (NAGC). Van Tassel-Baska (2007) reports that the No Child Left Behind Act has caused our schools to focus their attention on the students who are barely passing standardized tests in order to gain accreditation, thus ignoring those who excel on these assessments. Local educational agencies are able to determine which service options they will provide.

The two most commonly described forms of service options for gifted students are homogenously grouping gifted students in full-time classes in center-based settings, and heterogeneously grouping gifted students in clustered classrooms where a limited number of identified gifted students are provided services in a class mixed with mostly high-achieving, non-gifted students. Research supporters of homogenously grouping gifted students believe gifted students are academically and emotionally motivated by immersion with peers of like ability (Feldhusen & Moon, 1992; Kulik & Kulik, 1992; Lawton, 1992). However, those who support heterogeneously grouping gifted students believe that exclusively gifted classes are elitist and gifted students can achieve without special instructional grouping (Oakes, 1985; Slavin, 1987).

The school district where this research study was conducted provides both of these forms of service options for gifted middle school students. The first service option offered is the center-based gifted program (CBG), which provides a learning environment

where gifted students attend a separate school-within-a-school program exclusively for gifted and talented students. The gifted instructional services are provided to CBG students in homogenously grouped, gifted classes and the enrolled gifted students do not interact with non-gifted students during their academic courses. Within the county there are four middle schools that house a center-based gifted school. All four schools follow the same academic curricula models; therefore attendance is not based on variances between programs, but stems from the students' geographical attendance zone within the county. The second service option provided allows gifted students to receive gifted instructional services by remaining in their home school in a school-based program (SBG). When gifted students choose this option their services are provided in a clustered classroom where gifted students are grouped with high achieving, honors students. The school district has 14 comprehensive middle schools, and all 14 offer the school-based, clustered gifted service option to students who choose not to attend the CBG program. The decision to attend a center-based gifted program or receive gifted services within a student's home school is made by students and their parents.

Gifted service options, whether through CBG or SBG, are provided to students beginning in third grade and continuing through eighth grade. Gifted service options are no longer provided to these students at the high school level, however, upon completion of either gifted service option these students, as with all students in the district may choose from the following options: 1) attend their local, geographically-zoned high school; 2) apply to, and after acceptance, choose to attend any of the nine specialty centers offered in the district's high schools; 3) apply to, and after acceptance, choose to

attend the International Baccalaureate program; 4) or apply to, and after acceptance, choose to attend one of the two Governor's School programs.

What constitutes individual academic success for students varies from student to student and from school to school. Individual student report cards indicating letter and grade-point achievement are often indicators of successful completion of a school year or completion of a program for a student. However, determining the success of the gifted service option is not as simple as issuing a grade-point average or letter-grade report card. The district currently does not administer any form of end assessment to determine whether one form of middle school gifted service option better meets the needs of the gifted student compared to the other middle school service option. According to Joyce Van Tassel-Baska (2005), best practices for gifted instruction allow for the development and exploration of a student's personal interests and abilities. Therefore, if there is a correlation between the gifted service options' ability to nurture the student's personal interests it should be reflected in his/her high school program choice.

A transition is defined in *Webster's* as, "A passage from one state, stage, subject, or place to another." There are various forms of transition that occur when adolescents move from middle school into high school including: academic transitions, organizational transitions, and social transitions. Transitioning from middle school to high school has been recognized by many researchers as a pivotal time in a student's academic career. Zeedyk (2003) regards this period in a child's life as extremely arduous, with impact on the student's academic and social welfare. As students move into high school they are dealing not only with more difficult coursework, but they are also establishing a new

identity and social status (Dillon, 2008). According to Mizelle and Irvin (2000) students are most successful in high school when their middle school program has provided students with a rigorous curriculum. A challenging curriculum in middle school makes the increased academic demands in high school less stressful for students because the high school academics do not seem to be that different. In addition, when students experience minimal transitions throughout elementary, middle school, and high school they establish secure peer relationships (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). Mizelle and Irvin (2000) explained minimal transitions as experience that allowed students to stay within their same peer constructs from one grade level to the next, without having to form new relationships at each transitional period. Therefore, one method of possibly assessing the success of different middle school gifted service options is to solicit the perceptions of gifted middle school students as they are transitioning from one of the two service options into high school.

Statement of the Problem

Federal and state regulations require gifted education services to be provided to gifted students. However, the alignment between specific gifted criteria for curriculum and program development, and the identification of specific program requirements in the form of service options are not standardized. School districts are left to make the decisions as to which method of service options for middle school gifted students will best support the needs of the gifted student, and sufficiently foster the individual academic interests of these students. No standardized or consistent form of measurement, which is aligned to the gifted curriculum and criteria, is required within the program in

order to report the impact the service option had on meeting the individual needs of the gifted student as they leave the service option and transition into a high school program. Therefore, establishing a form of measurement that adequately compares and evaluates the program-ending success trends of the service options for gifted middle school students should exist.

In addition, high school academic program options should offer a continuation of middle school gifted service options allowing district leaders and administrators to track the success and failures of their middle school gifted service options. When middle school gifted students complete their middle school programs high school opportunities should be available that extend the learning interests at a heightened, more rigorous level. Through tracking high school academic program choices made by middle school students who have completed one of the two service options for gifted students, district leaders will be able to identify which academic interests are being developed within particular service options, as well as which service options are not nurturing the development of individualized interests.

Finally, perceptions of gifted middle school students, as they transition out of one of the gifted middle school service options into a chosen high school academic program, have not been analyzed to demonstrate students' views of the connections of middle school service options to their high school academic program options. In addition, there are very few pieces of transition research regarding various gifted service options' impact on students' perceptions of high school. It is important for educators and educational policy makers to better understand the needs of gifted or high-achieving students as they

transition from middle to high school in order to provide better programs and support mechanisms that will enhance their secondary school experience and close performance achievement gaps.

Purpose of the Study

The overarching purpose of this study is to consider the perceptional differences of gifted middle school students as they transition from middle school into high school. The first of the three-fold purpose of this study is to establish patterns of high school academic program choices created by gifted middle school students who have been served in one of two middle school gifted service options in a large, suburban school district. Second, this study will examine the differences in the perceptions of the gifted students' chosen high school program's academic, organizational, and social constructs prior to the transition and after they transition into high school.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

According to the *VA Plan for the Gifted* (1996), "The decision to use one service option (e.g., program adaptation) instead of another, or a combination of options should be based upon the degree to which each option suits the philosophy of the school division and the unique needs of the gifted students in the division (p. 10)." By investigating the trends middle school gifted students create through their choices for high school academic programs school leaders will have the opportunity to look into the decision making process and influential factors of that process of gifted students when advancing to the next stage of their education. This study will demonstrate clear trends in high school academic program choices made by gifted middle school students who have

received two different forms of gifted service options. Through the identification of trend data, we will have a better understanding of which middle school gifted service option is more likely to promote students' ability to choose a high school program that continues the development of their developed academic interests.

In addition, school leaders want to provide all levels of students the best opportunities for learning. By looking at the perceptions of gifted middle school students provided with two different gifted service options, school district leaders will be able to see what students believed were the strengths and weaknesses of the service options and how the instruction within the service option may have influenced the continuation of their academic interests at the high school level. This aspect of the study will influence educational policy makers as they continue their pursuit to providing the best service options for middle school gifted students. According to Van Tassel-Baska, "Growth, change, and advanced levels of gifted student achievement can only occur when educators and leaders acknowledge the barriers and take the necessary steps toward minimizing them" (2005, p. 215).

Literature and Research Background

According to Van Tassel-Baska (2006) there is little information and research literature regarding the evaluation of gifted programs beyond the elementary grade levels. The hindrance of evaluating gifted programs lies with agreement upon the appropriate instrument that should be used to measure gifted programs. Most researchers do agree, however, that given the current era of academic accountability the focus of such research

should be on student performance and the results should be used for program enhancement (2006).

Research theory primarily supports homogenous ability grouping over that of heterogeneous learning environments for gifted students. The idea of segregating gifted students into an environment whereby their daily interactions and academic challenges are only with other gifted students is considered the same as ability grouping, and many believe that achievement advantages exist when gifted students do not instructionally interact with students who are not identified as gifted (Fiedler, Lange, & Winebrenner; 2002). According to Adams-Byers, Whitshell, and Moon center-based gifted schools provide students with greater academic advantages (2005). A study conducted by Feldhusen and Moon (1992) indicated that teachers attempting to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the academically gifted and sustain an appropriate curriculum for non-gifted learners are faced with a near impossible challenge that could be harmful to the gifted students' achievement in the classroom. When this task is presented to teachers they tend to lower the standards for the gifted students and teach these students using the standards applicable for the non-gifted population. According to Monaco (2008), "It is an injustice to try to teach a gifted student against the same standards as a student without an area of giftedness" (p.2). In like-ability classes or schools, teachers are afforded the opportunity to concentrate their instructional efforts toward the higher learning levels. Rogers reports that like-ability grouped gifted students most likely achieve at higher levels because their teachers are able to provide a higher

intensity of daily challenge and they can offer the quality of supervision demanded by this type of student (2007).

Providing students with a learning environment where they are grouped with peers who share the same academic abilities is also noted to increase their motivation to achieve because those they are surrounded by are equally motivated. Fiedler and Lange report that gifted students should be with peers who are intellectually equal in order for them to be appropriately challenged (1993). Being appropriately challenged implies that students in this group are motivated to achieve academically through the influence of their peers and therefore students who are not in a like-ability group environment may not feel the same motivation to do well academically and may not demonstrate the same level of achievement growth. In fact, Adams-Byers, Whitsell, and Moon (2004) found in her study a small number of gifted students, in mixed-ability classes, who felt relief by being in less challenging, mixed-ability classes because they were able to relax, and not try as hard and still earn a good grade.

With so much literature supporting homogenous grouping, the idea of mixing gifted students and non-gifted students to receive instruction would appear to be less conducive to support higher levels of achievement. However, further studies have found that the impact of the school's effectiveness and the teacher's abilities to differentiate the curriculum have greater influence on the gifted student's achievement than the actual model of instruction (Fiedler & Lange, 1993). In addition to what the school is providing to the students, students are also influenced by their personal demographics such as ethnicity and/or socio-economic status. It is reported that affluent and white gifted

students have more resources and background knowledge from home experiences than do their black and less affluent counterparts (Bracey, 2008). Therefore, in order to assess true value added to achievement of students receiving gifted services through various models, research would need to be able to identify the confounding variables of ethnicity and socio-economic status in order to strictly glean the effectiveness of the model. In 2000, Prince George's County Public Schools conducted a hierarchical linear model study of all of their magnet programs, one of which was a gifted magnet school program. The study was able to extract the demographic confounding variables and evaluate the true effectiveness on achievement by gifted students. The findings of this study did not reveal that the gifted magnet school students performed or achieved better than those who remained in their home school to receive services (Adcock & Phillips, 2000).

Research Questions

1. What are the patterns of high school academic program choices of gifted middle school students?
2. Are there differences between center-based and school-based gifted students' pre-transition academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the ninth-grade, high school academic program?
3. Are there differences between center-based and school-based gifted students' post-transition academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the ninth-grade, high school academic program?

Methodology

Sample Participants

The school district from which the sample was pulled is a moderately sized, suburban school district in central Virginia. This district consists of 13 comprehensive middle schools that serve gifted students in heterogeneously grouped classes of high achieving honors and gifted students. In addition, the district also has four center-based gifted middle schools that provide gifted services in homogenously grouped settings. A purposive sample included only gifted students who participated in three consecutive middle school years (6^{th} – 8^{th}) in either the center-based gifted service option or the school-based gifted service option.

The participants of this non-experimental, quantitative study consisted of 670 gifted eighth grade students who were enrolled in three consecutive years (6^{th} grade – 8^{th} grade) in one of two middle school gifted service options provided in the central Virginia, suburban school district. Of the 670 gifted eighth graders, 349 were enrolled in one of the four center-based gifted service options. The demographic make-up of the center-based gifted students was 49% female and 51% male, as well as 7% Asian, 5% Black, 2% Hispanic and 85% white, and 57% is American Indian and other/non-specified ethnicities. One percent of the center-based gifted students is eligible for free and reduced lunch services.

The school-based gifted service option consists of 321 students who are receiving gifted instruction within their home middle school in heterogeneously grouped classes. The demographic make-up of the school-based gifted students was 46% female and 54% male, as well as 5% Asian, 8% Black, 1% Hispanic, 85% White, and 1% American

Indian and other/non-specified ethnicities. Six percent of the school-based gifted students are eligible for free and reduced lunch services.

Participants in this study were identified as gifted in specified academic areas during their elementary academic years. The process by which they were identified first includes a nomination from a parent, community member, professional staff, student self-nomination, or transfer records that indicate previous identification. Following the nomination each school forms an Identification and Placement Committee that is responsible for screening nominations, reviewing the assessment criteria used for determining eligibility, and making service option recommendations for each identified student. Once a student receives his or her recommendation for gifted service options the student must decide if this is the academic route s/he wishes to follow. A student receiving a recommendation to receive gifted services through the center-based gifted program may choose to attend the CBG service option or may choose to attend his/her home school and receive school-based gifted services. A student who receives a school-based gifted service recommendation must choose whether to receive school-based gifted services within a heterogeneously grouped class of high-achieving honors students and other gifted students or to remain within the traditional comprehensive program and receive no gifted instructional services (Glenn, 2005). The participants in this study, after being identified as gifted, chose one of the two service options during elementary school and, therefore, participated in either CBG or SBG throughout their middle school academic years.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection.

The design of this study was a non-experimental quantitative design. It was conducted in a single suburban school district in central Virginia. This district consists of 13 comprehensive middle schools that serve gifted students in heterogeneously grouped classes of high achieving honors and gifted students and four center-based gifted middle schools that provide gifted services in homogenously grouped settings. All students participating in the study were administered the *Perceptions of Transition Survey* prior to transitioning into high school and again after they have made the transition. A purposive sample that included only gifted students who participated in three consecutive middle school years (6th – 8th) in either the center-based gifted service option or the school-based gifted service option served as the participants in this study. The independent variable of this study will be the service options with two levels: (1) Homogeneously grouped center-based gifted middle school students (CBG), and (2) Heterogeneously grouped school-based gifted middle school students (SBG). The dependent variables of the study were first the trends of high school academic program choices of CBG and SBG students. For questions 2 and 3 the dependent variables were the Pre- and Post-transition perceptions of CBG and SBG students regarding (1) ***academic*** constructs of their chosen high school program, (2) ***social*** constructs of their chosen high school program, and (3) ***organizational*** constructs of their chosen high school program. Permission was granted to use a modified version of the *Perceptions of Transition Survey*, which was originally used by Akos and Galassi (2004), and then adapted and used by Smith and Akos (2008) in their transition studies of elementary and middle

school students. The *Perceptions of Transition Survey* is a two-part survey, where the first part is administered as a pre-transition survey and the second part is administered post-transition. Both the pre- and the post- transition components of the survey measure middle school students' perceptions of the academic, social and organizational aspects of their program. Each aspect is measured using a 4-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The pre-transition survey contains 54 items that address the academic aspect, 20 items that address the social aspect, and 19 items that address the organizational aspect of the students' programmatic choice. The post-transition survey contains 53 items that address the academic aspect, 15 items that address the social aspect, and 23 items that address the organizational aspect of the students' programmatic choice. Questions were added to the original survey that specifically addressed the needs of gifted students and the service options from which they attended. Modifications were also made in order to address the first research question, which will identify programmatic trend frequencies among the center-based gifted students and the school-based gifted students.

Procedures.

All students identified as 8th graders enrolled in one of the two gifted service options (CBG and SBG) were administered the pre-transition survey. The post-transition survey was administered to those students who returned the pre-transition survey and identify that they have been enrolled in their middle school gifted service option for three consecutive years.

The pre-transition survey was administered to 8th grade students after the students have completed their third quarter in 8th grade. This time period has been chosen because the 8th graders will have submitted their high school program application, received acceptance or rejection notices, have completed three academic report cards, which gives them a realistic picture of their academic performance. The survey will consist of two primary categories that will be divided into appropriate sub-topics. The first primary category of the survey was used to gather demographic data of the students, to determine how long the student has been enrolled in his/her service option, and to identify the academic high school program that the students are considering applying to and enrolling in for their ninth grade year. The second primary category of the survey focused on the pre-transition perceptions of their high school academic program choices in the sub-categories of academic perceptions, social perceptions, and organizational perceptions. Questions in the sub-categories of academic, social, and organizational perceptions had question items presented in a Likert scale with a range of 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

The post-transition survey was administered to the students who completed and returned the pre-transition survey and have indicated on the pre-transition survey that they were enrolled in their gifted service option for three consecutive years. Students received the post-transition survey after they received their first quarter interim report card during their ninth grade year. This time was chosen because students had the opportunity to participate in school activities as ninth graders, acclimate into the routine and environment of their chosen high school program, received their first official record

of their academic performance via the interim report card. At the same time the experience of transitioning will still be relevant and recent.

Analysis.

The first research question, regarding the patterns of high school academic program choices of gifted middle school students, was analyzed using a frequency distribution. This analysis determined the frequency each high school academic program selected among center-based gifted middle school students and school-based gifted middle school students. The central tendency of each group was determined using the mode of program choice from each gifted group. Once the frequency distribution of high school program choice was determined a correlation between the variables of gifted service option and high school choice was determined.

Research questions two and three, investigated perceptions of the high school program before and after transitioning between center-based gifted and school-based gifted middle school students, used an independent sample *t*-test. In order to obtain an independent sample *t*-test the dependent variables of academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the center-based gifted and school-based gifted populations were gathered using the survey instrument. The questions in the survey addressed the three perception subcategories of academics, socialization, and organization. The two gifted populations were the independent variables. The table below aligns the research questions with their corresponding survey questions and the method by which each research question will be analyzed.

Limitations

An initial limitation of this study was the generalizability of the results. This study was conducted in a moderate to large suburban school district in Central Virginia. The school system provides gifted students with two gifted service options during their middle school years, and no specific gifted service option for high school. Gifted students have a choice of applying to attend a regional Governor's school, various specialty centers within the district, or selecting to attend their geographically home-zoned high school. Only systems of similar size and program offerings will be able to specifically apply the findings to their gifted populations. However, others may find the results useful as a starting point for conducting their own program research.

A second limitation of this study was the timing of the pre-transition survey administration. The survey was administered at the end of the school year following a period of standardized testing and just before release for summer vacation. This may have decreased the motivation and interest from students to participate in a lengthy questionnaire, thus causing a low response rate.

With that being said, a third limitation of the study was a low *n* generated from the pre-transition survey, and a smaller *n* generated from the post-transition survey. The small effect size creates difficulty in finding significant differences within the pre- and post-transition samples.

The self-selection process regarding which high school program to attend may be viewed as a limitation of this study. Students self-selected whether or not to apply to a Governor's school, specialty center, or to enter into their geographically zoned home high school. They were also self-selecting whether or not they would actually attend any of

these programs if they were accepted. Since students were self-selecting the extraneous influences that may impact their decision making process could be controlled. In addition, there may be extenuating circumstances such as transportation, family responsibilities, or other outside commitments that could have limited or impacted the available opportunities and, therefore, could not controlled.

Finally, the students self-reporting their data, particularly their perceptions of grades, could be considered a limitation of this study. This study, however, asked for students to self-report grades at a time that was very close to receiving official grades at the end of a marking period, therefore students having to guess as to what their grades actually were was minimized.

Summary

As school leaders look to policy and procedures to aid in the decision making process for implementing the most effective and beneficial instructional service options the need for research studies identifying the impact these service options have on gifted students are essential. Research, which captures the perceptions of middle school gifted students as they transition out of their middle school gifted service option into their chosen high school program, will enable educational policy makers in identifying the impact the different service options have on gifted students and their academic decisions.

In addition to school leaders and policy makers advisors, or guidance counselors, of gifted students need to be aware of gifted students' perceptions of transitioning into high school. Advisors need to assist students with the transition into high school by looking at trends, apprehensions, and shortcomings of gifted students. Understanding

these perceptions will help them to guide gifted middle school students in the appropriate direction for high school and equip them with preparatory knowledge that will help them avoid common pitfalls.

Finally, parents of gifted students need to understand the differences in the perceptions of students who have attended the two different gifted service options, and understand how those differences might impact their child's decision-making process and transition into high school. Parents are very involved with their children in helping them make positive decisions that impact their children's future. It is important that parents see that different service options have potentially different outcomes and those students from these service options make high school choices for different reasons.

Key Vocabulary

- Gifted: students whose abilities and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special educational programs to meet their educational needs.
- Service Options: the instructional approach or approaches, setting or settings, and staffing selected for the delivery of appropriate service or services that are based on student needs.
- Center-based Service Option: full-time classes, populated exclusively by gifted students, and housed in an existing, comprehensive middle school as a school-within-a-school.

- Cluster-based Service Option: honors level core-content courses, populated by both identified gifted and high-average/honors' level students, and is part of the regular, comprehensive middle school course schedule.
- Regional Governor's School: provide high school students with acceleration and exploration in areas ranging from the arts, to government and international studies, and to mathematics, science, and technology during the academic year.
- District Specialty Center: like magnet schools in definition these are optional academic programs, housed as a school-within-a-school, emphasizing academic rigor and higher level thinking with classes suited to each student's needs (including honors, AP, dual enrollment) coupled with a challenging curriculum in order to prepare students for excellent collegiate and professional opportunities.
- International Baccalaureate: a challenging and rigorous dual-diploma program based on internationally recognized standards and requirements; upon successful completion students receive a Virginia Advanced Studies Diploma, as well as the International Baccalaureate Diploma which is recognized as a standard of excellence and accepted by colleges and universities throughout the world.
- Traditional, Home High School: regular, geographically-zoned comprehensive high school where students receive core programs that provide the strong basic skills essential in today's culture: communication, computation, scientific discovery, and historical and geographic understanding.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Models for educating our most able students have been debated for decades. Many believe that isolating these students into homogenously grouped classes provides students with instruction at a heightened level that challenges the academic needs of these students. Others believe that mixing gifted students with other students who are high-achieving, but not gifted, provides an instructional and social balance for these students. Throughout the debates the perceptions of gifted students coming from various gifted service options as they transition into high school has not been considered. The review of the literature will explore gifted service options and the impact they have on the academic achievement of gifted students. The four major sections of this chapter are as follows: History of Gifted Instruction; Homogenously and Heterogeneously Grouped Gifted Service Options, High School Program Options, and Transitions. These sections will be followed by key terms and definitions used.

The research literature used to support this study was gathered through university electronic databases and limited print resources. In order to gain a better understanding of the historical arguments of grouping gifted students and political movements that influenced grouping methods, some literature from the 1980s was used. Additional literature focusing on grouping methods and transitions of students came from more recent studies conducted in the 1990s and 2000s. Search term indices included: gifted program grouping, homogenously grouping gifted; heterogeneously grouping gifted;

gifted education; self-perceptions of gifted; personality traits of gifted; transitions from middle to high school; and program options for gifted students.

Some limitations noticed in the research literature gathered were consistently low sample sizes among studies conducted with gifted populations. In addition, most of the studies were conducted within single school districts or within single schools or classes. This most likely was the cause of the small sample sizes, as gifted populations are a minority population within typical school settings. Another limitation found within the literature search was that of few findings of empirical data, but more findings of research reports that condensed other gifted specialist's beliefs to support the researcher's opinion. Also, limited literature was found that supported heterogeneously grouping gifted students. Finally, the search for literature regarding transitions of gifted students was sparse, and focused mainly on the transition of the general populations.

History

Gifted students are defined by the National Association for Gifted Children as, "Students who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities," (ESEA, 2001). While the definition of the gifted student is clear, what is not as clear are the services that are needed to 'fully develop those capabilities'. Identifying best practices for educating gifted students has been in experimental stages since its beginnings in 1868 with William Torrey Harris. Mr. Harris was the superintendent of schools in St. Louis, Missouri when he recognized that gifted students needed instruction that was different

than what was provided to non-gifted students in the public education system. Harris provided gifted students with the opportunity to move through the curriculum and grade level at an accelerated pace. Students could advance through a given grade level in as long as a year or as little as five-weeks, depending on the pace established by the student. Students were not removed from the regular classroom setting, but simply integrated in the regular classes, and advanced at their own pace (Davis & Rimm, 1994).

Despite the initial attempts by William Torrey Harris to create a unique learning opportunity for gifted students, gifted instruction would not be diversified or uniquely set apart again until 1918 when Lulu Stedman used the University Training School at the Southern Branch of the University of California to establish an "opportunity room" for gifted students. The "opportunity room" provided gifted students with separate classes that were accelerated in particular subject areas and were open only to gifted students. These classes were in addition to the regular, general instructional program for gifted students, but provided an avenue for gifted students to accelerate through grade levels at a faster pace (Davis & Rimm, 1994).

During the era of the Great Depression the governmental focus on education was providing equity to students, therefore gifted education historians attribute the de-emphasis of gifted education during this time period to the attitude of equity (Davis & Rimm, 1994). However, Leta Hollingsworth was particularly motivated with the education of the gifted and made great strides in providing specific programs for educating gifted students. It is evidenced in Hollingsworth's work and beliefs regarding the gifted students that she advocated a homogenous grouping of gifted students.

Hollingsworth believed that the unique methods of thinking and the enriched vocabulary possessed by gifted students made them difficult for traditional teachers to teach and for their non-gifted peers to understand and interact with normally. Hollingsworth established a "school-within-a-school" learning environment for 50 gifted students at Speyer School, P.S. 500 in New York City in 1937. She did this because she believed gifted students wasted time due to inadequate challenges provided by traditional classroom teachers and interactions with peers who could not relate to the level of thinking and stimulation required by gifted students (Davis & Rimm, 1994).

Interest in how we educate our gifted surged again when the Russians launched *Sputnik* in 1957 and the U.S. recognized that pushing equity may have resulted in mediocrity within education, therefore a need to better cultivate and prepare our most talented youth emerged (Davis & Rimm, 1994). In 1983 *A Nation At Risk* brought to the attention of educators that our brightest students were not being adequately reached; thus continuing the sense of urgency to implement best practices for gifted youth. This document provided recommendations for raising the bar in instructional practice and curriculum guidelines for the nation's gifted population (Davis & Rimm, 1994). This publication could be what has lead to the debates among gifted instructional theorists to closely analyze and intensely investigate the best grouping methods to meet the instructional and emotional needs of gifted students.

Homogenously Grouping of Gifted Students

As noted previously, Leta Hollingsworth established some of the original thinking of the best methods for delivering instructional services to gifted populations. Following

Hollingsworth's model, removing gifted students from the general student population was believed to be beneficial because it allowed gifted students to interact with peers who were as academically able as they were and it allowed the teacher to deliver curriculum at an enriched level (Kulik & Kulik, 1992). Kulik and Kulik conducted a meta-analysis of five different grouping methods of gifted students, including multi-level heterogeneously grouped students and homogenously grouped enriched gifted classes. Their meta-analysis of homogenously grouped students reviewed 25 studies of homogenously grouped students. Of the 25 studies, 22 found that students who participated in these exclusive programs achieved more than students not in a homogenously grouped setting, having a moderate effect size of 0.41. In addition, Kulik and Kulik noted that five of the 25 studies also considered the student's self-concept, which was indicated to be higher among students participating in homogenously grouped settings in all five studies. Sheppard and Kanevsky (1999) conducted a study in which they looked to compare the differences in metacognitive ability between gifted students in a homogenous gifted classroom setting and heterogeneous classroom setting. Participants in this study consisted of 24 students who were grouped within a heterogeneous class, of which three were identified gifted and the gifted subjects of the heterogeneously grouped population. There were 13 students in the homogenously grouped gifted class. The 16 participants ranged in age from 10 to 11-years old. Over the course of five days students were asked to solve various types of higher level problems in which they had to solve. After solving the problems students were asked to use an analogy that compared their thinking process for each problem to a machine. Responses were provided in three different formats that included written, drawn

and oral representations. The study produced three significant findings in regards to differences between homogeneously and heterogeneously grouped gifted students. The first of the findings indicated that students who were homogenously grouped included more thinking functions in their descriptions of the thinking process than those in the heterogeneously grouped students. The second finding resulted when both groups of students were asked whether they, "…had learned something new about how their mind works and what it was," (p. 2). The homogenously grouped gifted students provided answers that went into great depth and detail about what they learned. These students also used a more vivid and creative vocabulary in describing the functions of their minds, as opposed to the very nondescript, generic answers provided by the heterogeneously grouped students. Finally, a portion of the study's documentation used videotaping of the two grouping settings. The videotape revealed the students in the homogenously grouped class were more eager to share ideas and contribute to group discussions than the heterogeneously grouped students. In addition, the level of the conversations were conducted at a deeper level among the homogenously grouped students Therefore, the conclusion of this study was that the homogenously grouped gifted students in this research were better able to identify and describe their metacognitive ability than the heterogeneously grouped gifted students (1999). Sheppard and Kanevsky recognized the limitation of the sample size being small, and viewed their findings as tentative and not necessarily generalizable.

Sims & Crenshaw (2002) believed that gifted students who have been homogenously grouped and who are exposed regularly only to peers of like ability also

tend to develop faster and greater cognitive abilities. Fiedler and Lange in 1993 and the Fiedler, Lange and Winebrenner in 2002 reported on six myths regarding gifted education. The paper presented each myth and followed the myth with research-based arguments as to why the belief was indeed a myth. The fourth myth in their report addressed the impact that grouping had on achievement among gifted students. According to their researched argument, providing students with a learning environment where they are grouped with peers who share similar academic abilities has been found to increase their motivation to achieve because those they are surrounded by are equally motivated. They contend that being appropriately challenged implies that students in this group are motivated to achieve academically through the influence of their peers and therefore students who are not in a like-ability group environment may not feel the same motivation to do well academically and will not demonstrate the same level of achievement growth. To a greater extreme, educators fear that limited or no exposure to high performing academic peers can be detrimental to the academic development of gifted students, causing these students to fall short of meeting their future academic and professional possibilities (Fiedler, Lange, & Winebrenner, 1993 & 2002).

The idea of segregating gifted students into an environment so their daily interactions and academic challenges are only with other gifted students is called ability grouping, and researchers, such as Fiedler, Lange, and Winebrenner believe that achievement advantages exist when gifted students do not interact for academic learning purposes with students who are not identified as gifted (Fiedler & Lange, 1993). This information leads one to believe that placing gifted students in classrooms exclusively

with other gifted students might enhance these students' learning opportunities. In 2003 Bernal created a research-based argument report that called for a reorganization of gifted education and gifted programs. Bernal (2003) believed that gifted students needed a program specific to addressing the needs of gifted, and one that worked toward developing gifted skills. According to Bernal's report, when gifted students are grouped with like-ability peers their teachers are more apt and able to design instruction that focuses on individual academic needs. The variation in student needs is not as great as in heterogeneous classes and therefore more conducive for individualized, high-academic instructional focus (Bernal, 2003). Bernal supported the argument that classroom teachers of gifted and non-gifted students have reported that classrooms with a wide range of learning needs create complications in their ability to adjust their instruction for all types of learners. Bernal found that teachers attempting to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the academically gifted and sustain an appropriate curriculum for non-gifted learners are faced with a near impossible challenge that could be harmful to the gifted students' achievement in the classroom (2003). When this task is presented to teachers they tend to lower the standards for the gifted students and teach these students using the standards applicable for the non-gifted population (Monaco, 2008). Walker and Seymour (2002) supported in their study the same belief that when gifted students are mixed into a regular classroom their needs often are not addressed. When gifted students are not appropriately challenged within their academic instruction they may become bored or frustrated and fail to reach their maximum potential (Sims & Crenshaw, 2002). Therefore, it is reported that like-ability grouped gifted students most likely achieve at

higher levels because their teachers are able to provide a higher intensity of daily challenge and they can offer the quality of supervision demanded by this type of student (Rogers, 2007).

Phillips and Lindsay conducted a qualitative study of 15 gifted adolescents in England, in which the impact of motivation on achievement of gifted students was investigated. The study purposively selected the 15 students from five secondary schools that had used various measures to identify the students as gifted. The sample population was interviewed three different times in a semi-structured format, as were the students' teachers and parents for triangulation of the students' responses. The results of this study revealed that gifted students perceived an increased motivational level when they were grouped with students of similar interests and abilities. They believed that when grouped like this they received a faster pace of instruction, more competition, and a greater intellectual challenge (Phillips & Lindsay, 2006).

Moon, Swift and Shallenberger (2002) conducted a qualitative case study with 24 gifted fourth and fifth graders that investigated the effectiveness of a self-contained, homogenously grouped, class setting. Over the course of one school year data was collected from students, parents, the teacher, and the program administrator by means of observation, interviews, comparison essays, and goal setting. The classroom was observed on 16 difference occasions, with each observation lasting one to two hours. School personnel were interviewed once toward the end of the school year, parents were interviewed in their homes, and students were interviewed within two focus groups. All interviews were semi-structured. The findings of this study demonstrated that the self-

contained classroom specifically addressed the learning needs of the high ability level of the gifted students. The parent and teacher interviews supported this finding by indicating that instruction was presented at a higher, more challenging level for the students in the class. In addition, all forms of data collected indicated that the intellectual challenge within the group came from students being grouped with like-ability students.

Heterogeneous Grouping of Gifted Students

As educational practitioners began to question the best methods of delivering instructional services to gifted students heterogeneously grouping students came to the forefront of best practice, because educational systems viewed homogenously grouped gifted students as a form of tracking (Davis & Rimm, 1994). Leading the advocates of heterogeneously grouping students was Jeanine Oakes, who proposes that gifted students will learn and achieve no matter their learning environment, and exclusively providing accelerated services to gifted students will deny non-gifted students advanced opportunities (Oakes, 1985).

Adams-Byers, Squiller, and Moon (2004) conducted a qualitative study with 44 participants who were enrolled in a summer residential program for gifted and talented students. The purpose of the study was to explore the perception differences of homogenously and heterogeneously grouped students as they pertained to academics and social constructs. The student participants represented grades 5 – 11, and were divided into three program groups based on the grade levels they had completed. Data was collected through survey interviews with the students. The results of the study indicated that gifted students recognized some specific academic and social advantages for

heterogeneous grouping. Of the academic advantages identified, nine students reported that the curriculum was easier or more relaxed and three identified that the review of material was better in heterogeneously grouped classes. The social advantages of heterogeneously grouped gifted students were greater than the academic advantages. Of the social advantages identified eight students recognized the opportunity to help others as an advantage. In addition, five students indicated that being with more students/friends and greater diversity of peers as an advantage, and five others noted a greater opportunity to adjust to the diversity among peers as an advantage. The study also revealed that four students noted having a higher self-esteem when grouped heterogeneously as an advantage over homogenously grouping the gifted students (2004). The findings of this study appear to be aligned with those found in Kulik and Kulik's meta-analysis (1992) where they reported that mixed-ability classes had little impact on academic achievement, but seemed to have a positive impact on socialization within the gifted population.

Cluster models create more opportunity for gifted students to become self-directed learners by concentrating on their learning needs and progressing at a self-determined individual pace (Walker & Seymour, 2002). Gifted students who receive services within a clustered group tend to set higher academic and behavioral standards for those students who are not gifted (Cook-Sather, 2003). In fact, studies report that gifted students who might suffer from emotional and social challenges would benefit more by mixing with progressive, but non-gifted, students who are better apt at establishing social relationships. Compensating for this social disability among gifted students by interacting

in a heterogeneous setting helps these students when they begin their postsecondary life where establishing relationships is critical (Neihart, 2007).

Curry (1999) conducted a doctoral dissertation study that considered the impact three different middle school program options had on high school students' course choices and the performance within these advanced courses. Curry's study participants included 239 high school seniors in two Texas school districts. The middle school service options from which these students attended were an extracurricular enrichment program, an exclusive honors program, or a heterogeneously grouped middle school. Data for this study was collected through survey distribution to students, and results from the survey were cross-referenced with students' school records. The analysis compared students' from the three different gifted middle school service options to the number of advanced placement courses and test scores on these assessments. The results of this study found that those students who were heterogeneously grouped in middle school did not choose to take as many advanced placement courses and those who did take AP courses did not perform as well on the AP assessments. However, the study also considered these students' interest in leadership roles within the school and leadership courses taken during high school. The study found that the heterogeneously grouped middle school students enrolled in more leadership courses than those who came from the specialized gifted middle school programs. Again, this supports Kulik and Kulik's (1992) meta-analysis that found no academic achievement advantages among heterogeneously grouped gifted students, but a positive impact on social skills.

High School Program Options for Gifted Middle School Students

In the school district that this study is being conducted there is not a center-based gifted high school program as there is during the elementary and middle school years. In addition, once these students transition into a high school within the district providing gifted services in a heterogeneously grouped class setting also cease. Therefore, gifted students must move into a one of the existing district high school programs, or choose to leave the system to attend a private high school.

The school system for which this study will be conducted offers students several different academic paths for high school academic programs. Upon completion of middle school, students may choose to: 1) attend their local, geographically-zoned high school; 2) apply to, and after acceptance, choose to attend any of the nine specialty centers offered in the district's high schools; 3) apply to, and after acceptance, choose to attend the International Baccalaureate program; 4) or apply to, and after acceptance, choose to attend one of the two Governor's School programs. The idea of providing high school academic program choices to gifted students has been documented in research as a positive method of encouraging gifted students to take ownership in their education and make their education personally meaningful (Douglas, 2004). Douglas recognized that middle school students often ignored the advice of teachers and peers when making high school choices, primarily because they did not understand the differences within each choice, and they felt intimidated by not knowing; therefore these student choose not to partake in any of the higher-academic choices and continued on to attend their local, geographically-zoned high school (Douglas, 2004).

In order to provide gifted students with choices and meet their academic needs some high schools have created alternative avenues for program choices from which gifted middle school students can choose. Buchanan and Woerner (2002) studied five schools that were successfully meeting the academic challenges of gifted high school students that they identified as choice schools for gifted students. Some of the appealing characteristics that Buchanan and Woerner found in these chosen high school programs were the opportunity to learn in small community environments (2002). Different from the comprehensive high school, the schools of choice had curricula that were designed around a focused, nontraditional theme or experience; this meant that the school did not try to be accommodating to all students with various interests, but was targeted just for students who had an interest in the particular theme or experience. The study also found that students who selected learning environments believed they had more voice in the development of the curriculum and their learning (2002).

Foust, Hertberg-Davis, & Callahan (2009) conducted a qualitative study in which he investigated the non-academic implications of gifted students attending AP and IB high school programs. Four high schools were chosen through a stratified purposeful sampling from the larger study of 24 high schools. There were 84 students from the four high schools who were interviewed within focus groups. The study found clear advantages and disadvantages for gifted students who chose to attend these specialized high school programs. Some of the advantages discovered were a perceived better atmosphere, which included teachers being more prepared to meet gifted needs, teachers being more respectful, and a greater sense of shared aims among peers within the

program. In addition to the advantages of participating in specialized high school programs, the student participants also reported several disadvantages. Disadvantages were reported as perceiving a negative stereotype from those students who were part of the general comprehensive high school. Also noted as a disadvantage of participating in this specialized high school was a heavier workload than that of those who chose to attend the general high school program. Finally, the disadvantage of additional stress and fatigue was reported by those attending the AP and IB program, which seemed to stem from the larger workload.

Matthews and Kitchen (2007) studied perceptions of students and teachers who were part of three public secondary schools in Canada that housed a school-within-a-school, much like the specialty centers that are part of the district for this study. Matthews and Kitchen (2007) conducted a case study of these schools and used interview and survey questions to gather the results from the participants. The study revealed that those gifted students who attended the specialty programs believed the program had more challenging academics, enriched opportunities, offered a faster pace, more interesting coursework, stronger teachers and better preparation for college. The study also revealed that gifted students who attended these programs perceived social strengths from attending, such as having the opportunity to interact with students who were smarter and shared similar goals or interests. Other social strengths noted were the development of positive learning habits and management skills. They also expressed strengths in organizational dynamics such as having smaller class sizes, increased opportunities for group work, more discipline, and more enthusiastic teachers (2007).

Transitioning From Gifted Middle School Into High School

For the gifted middle school students who were homogenously grouped, this small environment might be perceived as an influencing factor when choosing to attend a specialty program over the traditional, geographically-zoned home high school. In addition, if gifted students receive instruction in an environment that hones and nurtures their personal interests and goals, they should be able to use this understanding to influence their decision-making process when deciding which high school academic program they wish to attend.

Kathryn Schiller (1999) researched the feeder pattern students followed when transitioning from middle school to high school and how it impacted the academic success of students was considered. In addition the study also examined the impact of school choice, when it was available, and how it impacted the academic performance of ninth graders. Performance data was collected by using the students' mathematics grades from their ninth grade year. Students in the study followed four different types of middle to high school transition patterns. Students in the type 1 transition pattern moved from the same middle school into the same high school. Type 2 pattern had 50% of the students from the same middle school moving into one high school and the other 50% moving into a second high school. Type 3 patterns indicated that 90% of the middle school students moved into the same high school and fewer than 10% moved into a second high school. Finally, the type 4 transition pattern moved several groups of fewer than 10% of entire middle school population into several different high schools because choice was available within this pattern. The study found that middle school students who transitioned into

high school with a significant number of their peers experienced a significantly less negative academic impact. However, the negative academic impact increased for middle school students who transitioned into a high school with fewer of their middle school classmates.

Brenda Curry (1999) conducted an analysis of program options for middle school gifted students, whereby the impact of different service options on high school course choices, leadership roles, and scores on aptitude tests in high schools were used as measures of success. The study was conducted in three middle schools from the Dallas/Fort Worth school districts. The student sample consisted of 239 high school seniors who were identified as gifted and participated in one of the three middle school gifted programs. Curry found that students who transitioned from homogenously grouped gifted middle school programs chose a more rigorous course load upon entering into and throughout their high school career than those who participated in the heterogeneously grouped gifted middle school program. In addition, Curry's study found that students who attended the homogenously grouped gifted middle school programs scored higher on both Advanced Placement examinations and Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test than those students who participated in the heterogeneously grouped gifted middle school program (1999).

Bridget Henry's (2008) dissertation research investigating the differences between high-achieving and under-achieving students enrolled in Advanced Placement and honors level high school courses found that students' perceptions of their ability coming into the more rigorous programs impacted their performance level. Henry's research was

conducted in Torrance West High School, which is within the southwestern region of Los Angeles County, California. The study sample was comprised of 169 Advanced Placement and honors students who were not only participating in the AP or honors courses, but had been identified as advanced-level students who were capable of successfully completing rigorous coursework. Participants were separated into two groups of either high-achieving, defined as those meeting or exceeding proficiency levels on state standardized assessments and receiving an A or B grade in core academic subjects, or under-achieving, defined as those who were meeting or exceeding proficiency levels on state standardized assessments and were receiving a C, D or F in core academic subjects. The students completed a survey in the fall that assessed their cognitive and social perceptions of their coursework and abilities and students' grades were reviewed at the end of the school year. The results of the study revealed that those students who perceived themselves as more able performed better in the Advanced Placement and honors level courses than those who were apprehensive entering the programs. In addition, the survey questions asked students why they chose to enroll in these more rigorous courses, and found the majority of both the high-achieving and under-achieving students did so to challenge themselves. The reason cited least in both populations was that they wanted to be with their friends (2008).

According to a study conducted by Mizelle, Jordan, et al (1993) all middle school students who were grouped together for sixth, seventh and eighth grade experienced greater success when transitioning into high school. Mizelle, Jordan, et al believed that one of the goals of middle school educators should be to help students make positive

transitions into high school by providing them with appropriate support systems and necessary encouragement. This study was conducted within four middle schools located in Northeast Georgia. The participants involved were approximately 100 middle school students and their teachers who stayed together throughout the three middle school years. These students were compared to students who were not members of the four participating middle schools and did not stay in a cohesive cluster throughout the middle grades (1993). The results of the study found that most middle school students experience difficulties when transitioning to high school. In addition, the report found that students who were provided clear articulation of the transition experienced fewer difficulties than those who did not received clear communication regarding the transition process.

Understanding the transition period of gifted middle school students is important because this particular subgroup is often assumed to be academically successful and therefore their needs are often ignored (Renzuli & Park, 2000). Renzuli's study indicated that gifted students often perceive school as boring and offering them limited challenges upon entering the school. In Renzuli's (2000) study of gifted student dropouts, he addressed the question of why gifted students drop out of school and what are the characteristics of these dropouts. The report revealed various characteristics of the gifted dropout to be one or all of the following: an unstable home life; drug and alcohol use; lack of interest and motivation in high school; a negative attitude toward the high school; and an incomplete or unchallenging gifted high school program. Renzuli's study used data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, which collected data from nearly 25,000 eighth grade students, their parents, teachers, and school administrators.

The participating students completed a questionnaire as eighth graders, and then those who dropped out of school before graduating were sent a dropout questionnaire to complete. In regards to gifted male students' reasons for dropping out the study revealed that students left because they were failing high school, they couldn't keep up with the school work. Female gifted students' reasons for dropping out were documented as simply not liking school, failing school, and not being able to keep up with coursework (2000).

Summary

While the definition of the gifted student is clear, the clarity of the extraordinary services needed to fully develop those capabilities is not as clear. Identifying best practices for educating gifted students has been in experimental stages since its beginnings in 1868 with William Torrey Harris. Interest in how we educate our gifted surged again with the launch of *Sputnik* in 1957 and with the publishing of *A Nation At Risk* in 1983, when the U.S. recognized that pushing equity may have resulted in mediocrity within education, therefore a need to better cultivate and prepare our most talented youth emerged (Davis & Rimm, 1994). Recommendations for how to raise the bar in instructional practice and curriculum guidelines for the nation's gifted population emerged (Davis & Rimm, 1994) sparked the debate over the best service options to meet the needs of gifted students. Proponents of homogenously grouping gifted students believe that when these students are not appropriately challenged within their academic instruction they become bored or frustrated and fail to reach their maximum potential (Sims & Crenshaw, 2002). Homogenous-grouping advocates report that like-ability

grouped gifted students most likely achieve at higher levels because their teachers are able to provide a higher intensity of daily challenge and they can offer the quality of supervision demanded by this type of student (Rogers, 2007). However, leading advocates of heterogeneously grouping gifted students support that these students will learn and achieve no matter their learning environment, and exclusively providing accelerated services to gifted students will deny non-gifted students of advanced opportunities (Oakes, 1985). Heterogeneous-grouping supporters believe that more opportunities for gifted students to become self-directed learners are created in these environments (Walker & Seymour, 2002).

One method of addressing needs for middle school gifted students who are entering high school is to provide these students with choice through creating alternative avenues for high school programs, such as Regional Governor's Schools and specialty centers. Studies have found clear advantages for those gifted students who chose to attend these specialized high school programs (Foust, Foust, Hertberg-Davis, & Callahan, 2009). Despite advantages found within offering high school choice, the transition period of the gifted population cannot go unrecognized as a pivotal point in their careers as they move from a specific gifted service option into a high school program that is not uniquely designed for them. Transition is marked with new obstacles and feelings of uncertainty that can inhibit and adolescent's performance is s/he is not provided with the appropriate support prior to and after the transition from middle to high school. Understanding the perceptions of these students as they transition is critical because this particular subgroup

is often assumed to be academically successful and not in need of transition support (Renzuli & Park, 2000).

Chapter 3

Introduction

This study seeks to understand the perceptions of middle school gifted students as they transition from their middle school gifted program into their chosen high school program. As discussed in previous chapters gifted middle school students have the opportunity to receive one of two forms of instructional service options. The first service option is that of center-based, homogenously grouped gifted instruction. In this service option gifted students attend classes that are exclusively populated by other gifted peers and have no interactions with non-gifted students. The second service option is that of school-based, heterogeneously grouped gifted instruction. This service option places a small group of gifted students in a regular classroom setting with a majority of high-achieving, non-gifted students. Upon completion of either middle school gifted service option, students must choose which high school academic program will best provide a successful continuation of their gifted academic needs. To understand how gifted middle school students make this high school academic program choice, it is important to establish the trends of high school academic program attendance, and understand the perceptions of the students feel as they anticipate attending the high school they choose, as well as understanding these students' perceptions of high school as they transition into high school. Studying the perceptions of the gifted students making these choices will enable policy makers to better understand and plan for the apprehensions, obstacles and opportunities that are anticipated and experienced by gifted students from both service options when they transition into high school programs. Knowing this information will

also enable school leaders to anticipate which service option group of gifted students may face greater successes or obstacles when transitioning into various high school programs.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions:

1. What are the patterns of high school academic program choices of gifted middle school students?
2. Are there differences between center-based and school-based gifted students' pre-transition academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the ninth-grade, high school academic program?
3. Are there differences between center-based and school-based gifted students' post-transition academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the ninth-grade, high school academic program?

Methodology

The design of this study was a non-experimental quantitative design. The independent variable of this study was the service options with two levels: (1) Homogeneously grouped center-based gifted middle school students (CBG), and (2) Heterogeneously grouped school-based gifted middle school students (SBG). The dependent variables of the study were first the trends of high school academic program choices of CBG and SBG students. For questions 2 and 3 the dependent variables were the Pre- and Post- transition perceptions of CBG and SBG students regarding (1) *academic* constructs of their chosen high school program, (2) *social*

constructs of their chosen high school program, and (3) *organizational* constructs of their chosen high school program.

Research procedures were approved by the Internal Review Board. In addition, the school district granted permission to the student researcher to complete the study. Contact information for the student researcher and IRB were provided to the participants in order to address any follow-up questions they may have. Participants were asked to participate through notification in a parental consent form and the student/subject assent form, which were distributed and sent home through the subjects' English class. Students' identification numbers were requested on the survey, but were used for pre- and post- survey matching purposes. No other private identifiable data was collected from the participants. Demographic data was general enough to prevent identification of participants as a result of their responses.

Sample Selection

The school district from which the sample was drawn is a moderately sized, suburban school district in central Virginia. This district consists of 13 comprehensive middle schools that serve gifted students in heterogeneously grouped classes of high achieving honors and gifted students. In addition, the district also has four center-based gifted middle schools that provide gifted services in homogenously grouped settings. A purposive sample included only gifted students who participated in three consecutive middle school years (6^{th} – 8^{th}) in either the CBG service option or the SBG service option.

Participants in this study were identified as gifted in specified academic areas during their elementary academic years. The process by which they were identified first includes a nomination from a parent, community member, professional staff, student self-nomination, or transfer records that indicate previous identification. Following the nomination each school forms an Identification and Placement Committee that is responsible for screening nominations, reviewing the assessment criteria used for determining eligibility, and making service option recommendations for each identified student. Once a student receives his or her recommendation for gifted service options the student must decide the appropriate gifted service option. A student receiving a recommendation to receive gifted services through the center-based gifted program may choose to attend the CBG service option or may choose to attend the home school and receive school-based gifted services. A student who receives a school-based gifted service recommendation must choose whether to receive school-based gifted services within a heterogeneously grouped class of high-achieving honors students and other gifted students or to remain within the traditional comprehensive program and receive no gifted instructional services (Glenn, 2005). The participants in this study, after being identified as gifted, chose one of the two service options during elementary school and, therefore, participated in either center-based gifted or school-based gifted throughout their middle school academic years. The participants of this non-experimental, quantitative study consisted of 670 gifted eighth grade students who were enrolled in three consecutive years (6^{th} grade – 8^{th} grades) in one of four middle school gifted service options provided in the central Virginia, suburban school district. Of the 670 gifted eighth

graders, 349 are enrolled in one of the four center-based gifted service options. The demographic make-up of the center-based gifted students was 49% female and 51% male, as well as 7% Asian, 5% Black, 2% Hispanic and 85% white, and 1% is American Indian and other/non-specified ethnicities. One percent of the center-based gifted students were eligible for free and reduced lunch services.

Description of Sample Respondents

The center-based gifted pre-transition survey population consisted of 101 respondents, who had completed three consecutive years of the center-based program. The demographic make-up of the center-based gifted pre-transition population is 57% female and 53% male, as well as 5% Asian, 5% Black, 3% Hispanic and 84% white, and 6% other/non-specified ethnicities.

Only center-based gifted students who completed the pre-transition survey were selected to complete the post-transition survey. The center-based gifted post-transition survey population consisted of 54 respondents, who had completed three consecutive years of the center-based program. The demographic make-up of the center-based gifted post-transition population is 65% female and 39% male, as well as 2% Asian, 2% Black, 3% Hispanic and 89% white, and 6% other/non-specified ethnicities.

The school-based gifted service option consisted of 321 students who are receiving gifted instruction within their home middle school in heterogeneously grouped classes. The demographic make-up of the school-based gifted students is 46% female and 54% male, as well as 5% Asian, 8% Black, 1% Hispanic , 85% white, and 1.25% is

American Indian and other/non-specified ethnicities Six percent of the school-based gifted students are eligible for free and reduced lunch services.

Only the school-based gifted students who completed the pre-transition survey were asked to complete the post-transition survey. The school-based gifted pre-transition survey population consisted of 36 respondents, who had completed three consecutive years of the school-based program. The demographic make-up of the school-based gifted post-transition population is 39% female and 61% male, as well as 11% Asian, 5% Black, 0% Hispanic, 83% white, and 0% other/non-specified ethnicities.

The school-based gifted post-transition survey population consisted of 18 respondents, who had completed three consecutive years of the school-based program. The demographic make-up of the school-based gifted post-transition population is 39% female and 61% male, as well as 11% Asian, 5% Black, 0% Hispanic, 83% white, and 0% other/non-specified ethnicities.

Table 1

Characteristics of Population and Sample

Characteristics	Population		Sample			
	CBG	SBG	Pre-Transition		Post-Transition	
			CBG	SBG	CBG	SBG
Gender	349	321	88	36	54	18
Female	49%	46%	57%	53%	65%	39%
Male	51%	54%	42%	47%	35%	61%
Ethnicity						
White	85%	85%	84%	58%	89%	83%
Black	5%	8%	5%	14%	2%	5%
Hispanic	2%	1%	3%	3%	2%	0%
Asian	7%	5%	5%	14%	2%	11%
American Indian/Other Non-Specified	1%	1.25%	6%	11%	6%	0%

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Collection

The original protocol established with Internal Review Board approval for administering the pre-transition survey called for eighth grade students in center-based gifted or school-based gifted English classes to complete the survey in their regularly

scheduled, eighth grade English class within the normal school day. The student researcher met with eighth grade English teachers to discuss the process of the survey administration and collection, and answered any questions regarding administration at their school.

Consent forms and assent forms were sent home for parental review and signature through the eighth grade English class. Forms were distributed by the eighth grade English teacher. The consent and assent forms did not ask for the student's identification number and the surveys did not call for the student to identify his/her name; therefore once both were collected and returned to the student researcher there was no way to match permission/assent forms to the student's individual pre-transition survey; therefore, anonymity in the survey process was ensured.

Each English teacher only administered and collected surveys from those students who returned a signed permission and assent form. The pre-transition surveys were returned through the school systems interoffice mail system in preaddressed envelopes provided by the student researcher.

An adjustment to the original protocol had to be made, as the number of surveys which were returned did not generate a high enough *n* to conduct valid research. The Internal Review Board required a "Revised Research Plan" be submitted in order to proceed with the modified collection methods. Therefore, to accommodate for this low number and attempt to increase the *n* consent forms, assent forms, the Pre-Transition survey and a new cover letter were mailed to the homes of the students' who did not return a survey during the in-class administration. In addition to the necessary forms,

survey, and cover letter two pre-addressed and stamped envelopes were included for students to return the forms and survey separately. The new cover letter included a completion deadline and due date, as well as specific instructions explaining that the consent and assent forms must be returned separately from the pre-transition survey. This was done in order to ensure continued identity protection of the student. Finally, an online version of the pre-transition survey was created in order to prompt those students who did not want to fill out a paper/pencil version of the survey and were more comfortable using online methods. The URL address for the online pre-transition survey was provided in the new cover letter. Students who completed the online version were still required to mail the assent and consent forms to the student researcher.

A follow-up postcard was mailed approximately two-weeks after the original pre-transition survey was sent to students in order to remind them to complete the survey and return the necessary forms. In addition to the reminder the postcard also provided students with a link to the online version of the survey. The postcard reminded students that the consent and assent forms needed to be returned via the traditional US Postal service, but the survey could be completed online. Again, the identity of the student was protected because the consent and assent forms did not ask parents or students to provide the student's identification number, and the online survey did not ask students to provide their name. Therefore the two could not be matched by the student researcher.

Finally, in mid-August a final postcard reminder was mailed to students. This postcard reminded parents/students of the last opportunity to complete either the

paper/pencil version of the survey and to return the consent and assent forms. Again, the postcard reminded students that the consent and assent forms needed to be returned via the traditional US Postal service, but the survey could be completed online.

The post-transition survey was distributed only to those ninth graders who completed the pre-transition surveys as 8th graders. These students were identified through the school system's research and planning team, who used the student's identification number from the pre-transition survey to generate mailing labels for these students. The envelopes mailed to students contained: 1) a cover letter, which reminded students of the completed pre-transition survey; 2) a paper/pencil version of the post-transition survey and a link to an online version of the post-transition survey; and 3) a pre-addressed and stamped return envelope. Paper/pencil surveys were returned through the US Postal system in preaddressed and pre-stamped envelopes provided by the student researcher, or students post-transition surveys were completed online using *SurveyMonkey*.

Approximately two weeks after the initial mailing of the post-transition survey a follow-up/reminder postcard was mailed to all students who were contacted about the post-transition survey. The postcard reminded students of the survey that was sent as well as the URL address for the online version of the survey. Finally, the postcard restated the deadline for opportunities to complete the survey and return it to the student researcher.

Analysis

Permission was granted to use a modified version of the *Perceptions of Transition Survey*, which was originally used by Akos and Galassi (2004), and then adapted and used by Smith and Akos (2008) in their transition studies of elementary and middle school students. The *Perceptions of Transition Survey* is a two-part survey, where the first part is administered as a pre-transition survey and the second part is administered post-transition. Both the pre- and the post- transition components of the survey measure middle school students' perceptions of the academic, social and organizational aspects of their program. Each aspect is measured using a 4-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Questions were added to the original survey that specifically addressed the needs of gifted students and the service options from which they attended. Also an additional question was added to the pre-transition and post-transition surveys that asked to provide insight into the types of grades they normally received throughout middle school and at the end of the first quarter in their ninth grade year. This question provided students with nine grade options, which included: Mostly As; Mixed As and Bs; Mostly Bs; Mixed Bs and Cs; Mostly Cs; Mixed Cs and Ds; Mostly Ds; Below D; do not know. Finally, additional questions were added to the pre-transition and post-transition survey that identified which high school the students chose to attend. This information, along with the demographic information, which identifies ethnicity and gender, will be used to establish attendance trends from the two forms of service options, as well as the trends that are created within subgroups from the two service options.

Pre-Transition Survey

The pre-transition survey contained 32 items that addressed the academic constructs, 21 items that address the organizational constructs, and 32 items that address the social constructs of the students' pre-transition perceptions of their high school program choice.

Construct	Question Number
Academic	11 27: b, d, g, h, I, j, k, l, n 28: c, d, g, j, n, o 29: c, k, n, p, q, r, s, x 30: c, k, n, p, q, r, s, x
Organizational	27: a, p 28: a, h, I, m 29: d, g, h, I, j, l, m, o, t, u, y, z 30: a, d, g, h, I, j, l, m, o, t, u, v, y, z
Social	27: c, e, f, m, o, q, 28: b, e, f, k, l 29: a, b, e, f, v, w 30: b, e, f, w

Figure 1. Pre-transition questions.

Post-Transition Survey

The post-transition survey contained 38 items that addressed the academic construct, 18 items that addressed the organizational construct, and 17 items that addressed the social construct of the students' post-transition perceptions of the high school program choice.

Construct	Question Number
Academic	11 26: b, d, g, h, I, j, k, l, m, o 27: c, d, g, j, n, p, 28: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, I j, k, l, m 29: v, k, n, p, q, r, s, x,
Organizational	26: a, q 27: a, h, I, m 29: d, g, h, I, j, l, m, o, t, u, y, z
Social	26: c, e, f, n, p, r 27: b, e, f, k, l 29: a, b, e, f, v, w

Figure 2. Post-transition questions.

The first research question, regarding the patterns of high school academic program choices of gifted middle school students, was analyzed for differences using a crosstabs descriptive analysis with a chi-square to verify differences. This analysis will determine the frequency each high school academic program is selected by center-based gifted middle school students and school-based gifted middle school students. The central

tendency of each group will be determined using the mode of program choice from each gifted group. Once the frequency distribution of high school program choice is determined a correlation between the variables of gifted service options and high school choice will be determined.

Research questions two and three, which investigated perceptions of the high school program before and after transitioning between center-based gifted and school-based gifted middle school students, will use an independent samples *t*-test. Prior to completing the independent *t-test* analysis each of the construct questions will be analyzed with a factor analysis to ensure alignment among tested variables within each construct. In order to obtain an independent samples *t*-test the dependent variables of academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the center-based gifted and school-based gifted populations will be gathered using the survey instrument.

Chapter 4

Part 1: Frequency Analysis of Program Choice

Research Question 1:

1. What are the patterns of high school academic program choices of gifted middle school students?

A) What are the patterns among center-based gifted?

B) What are the patterns among school-based gifted?

Gifted middle school students had the opportunity to apply to a number of high school programs including two regional Governor's schools, two International Baccalaureate programs, and 10 Specialty Centers, which are specialized high school academic programs housed within a comprehensive high school. Students could also choose to attend their geographically home-zoned high school, of which there are 10. In some cases a student might decide to discontinue public school and apply to a private school. For analysis purposes International Baccalaureate programs and private school were categorized with the specialty centers because the studied school district IB programs are listed as specialty centers. Private schools required an application process similar to the specialty centers but were not as exclusive as the regional Governor's schools.

Data was analyzed using SPSS. Table 2 illustrates that a statistically significant difference exists between center-based gifted students and school-based gifted students when making the high school program choice of attending a regional Governor's school and when making the choice to attend one of the district's specialty centers. However,

when examining the choice to attend the students' geographically, home-zoned school no statistically significant difference was found between the choices of center-based gifted and school-based gifted.

Table 2

CBG v. SBG High School Program Choice

	Governor's School			Specialty Center			Home High School		
	%	*n*	*p*	%	*n*	*p*	%	*n*	*p*
CBG	28	28	0.000	34	34	0.006	39	39	0.696
SBG	2	1		56	31		42	23	

Governors' schools: $X^2(1,N=156) = 15.79$, Phi = -.318, p = 0.00; Specialty Center: $X^2(1,N=156) = 7.55$, Phi = .220, p = 0.01; Home High School: X^2 (1, N=156) = .153, Phi = .031, p = 0.70

Where Table 2 represents the overall findings among the center-based gifted and school-based gifted program choices, a more thorough examination of the findings will be provided in the following sections.

Governor's School Choice

Although there is a statistically significant difference between CBG and SBG students' choice of attending Governor's Schools, these findings are based upon only 3 SBG students and 28 CBG students. Therefore, the small cell size limits the analysis. As Table 3 indicates, 28% of the center-based gifted students chose to attend one of the

regional Governor's schools and only 2% of the school-based gifted students chose to attend one of the regional Governor's schools.

Table 3

CBG vs. SBG Governor's School

	Governor's School		
	%	*N*	*p*
CBG	28	28	0
SBG	2	1	

$X^2(1,N=156) = 15.79$, Phi = -.318, p = 0.00

An optional open-ended response survey question was presented to students asking them to explain why they chose one of the regional Governor's schools. Figure 3 depicts the responses of center-based gifted students' reasons for making this high school program choice. The CBG population indicated that their decision to attend a regional Governor's was made based on personal interest. Within this same group academic challenge was noted 10 times as a factor leading to their decision to attend a regional governor's school. Parental encouragement was noted only three times, a regional governor's school being good for college applications was noted twice, and friends or a sibling attending a regional governor's school was noted once.

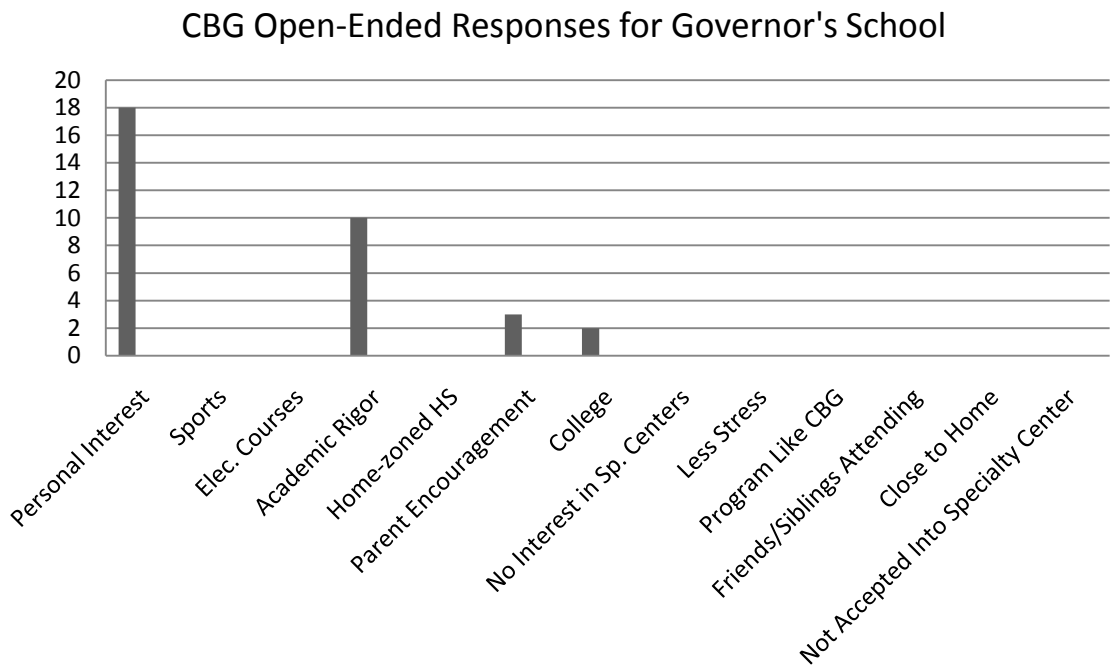

Figure 3. Open-ended responses from center-based gifted identifying reasons for choosing a regional Governor's School.

Figure 4 depicts the reasons noted from the one school-based gifted student who chose to attend one of the regional Governor's schools. This student noted once that the choice was made because of personal interest. Also noted once were parental encouragement and because a sibling had attended a regional Governor's school.

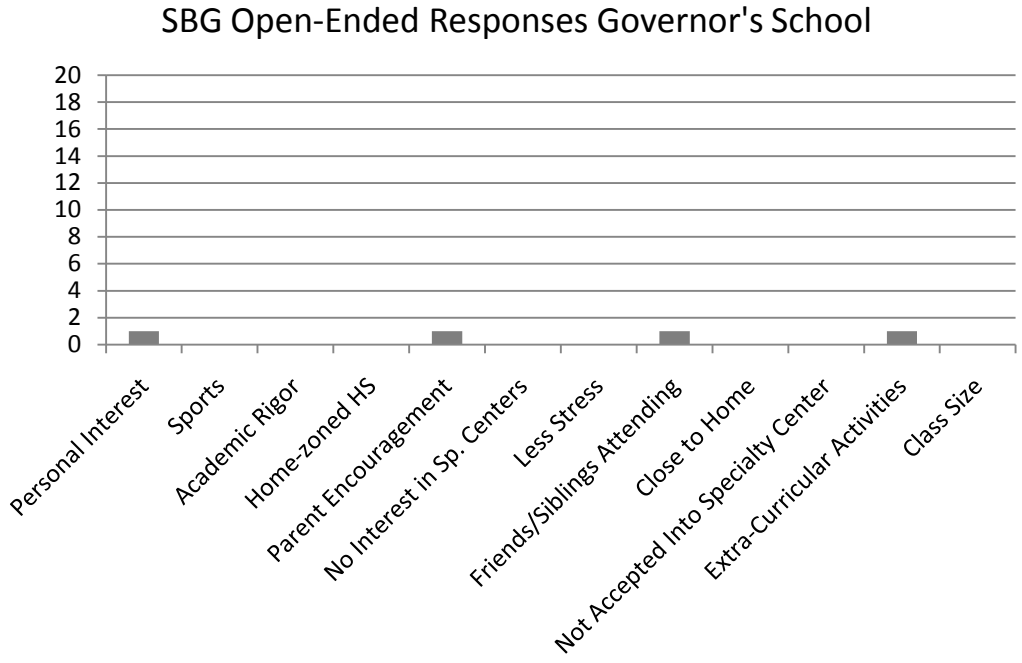

Figure 4. Open-ended responses from center-based gifted identifying reasons for choosing a regional Governor's School.

Gender and Governor's School Choice

A statistically significant difference in choice was also found by gender. Again, small cell size limits the analysis that can be done. Table 4 shows that a statistically significant difference exists by gender and program in Governor's school selection. The crosstabs analysis indicated that 27% of the female CBG population chose to attend a regional Governor's school, whereas only 3% of the females within the SBG program chose to attend. Among the male population, the crosstabs analysis indicated that 28% of the male CBG students chose to attend a regional Governor's school, but none of the male SBG students chose to attend.

Table 4

Gender within MS Programs Governor's School

	Female			Male		
	%	n	*p*	%	n	*p*
CBG	27	17	0.005	28	11	0.005
SBG	3	1		0	0	

Female: $X^2(1,N=156) = 8.046$, Phi = -.293, p = 0.01; Male: $X^2(1,N=156) = 7.886$, Phi = -.357, p = 0.01

Ethnicities and Governor's School Choice

Differences by types of middle school program and student ethnicity followed the previous pattern, but small cell size limits the analysis that can be done. Table 5 shows the results between Asian, minority, and white students choosing to attend one of the Regional Governor's Schools, within either the CBG or the SBG program. The results indicated that a statistically significant difference exists among Asians, minorities, and whites within the gifted middle school programs in the frequency of choosing to attend a Regional Governor's School. The crosstabs analysis indicated that, while the n for the Asian population choosing to attend a regional Governor's school was only three, which amounted to 25% of the Asian population from the center-based gifted middle schools choosing to attend a regional Governor's school. Among the school-based gifted Asian population, none chose to attend one of the regional Governor's schools. Eighty percent of the minority population from the center-based gifted middle schools chose to attend a regional Governor's school, whereas none of the school-based gifted minority population chose to attend one of the regional Governor's schools. However, because only 1 student

from a SBG program chose a Governor's School, the sample cell size was not large enough to do meaningful analysis. Finally, 25% of the white center-based gifted population chose to attend a regional Governor's school, and only 3% of the white school-based population chose to attend.

Table 5

Ethnicity within MS Programs Governor's School

	Asian			Minority			White		
	%	*n*	*p*	%	*n*	*p*	%	*n*	*p*
CBG	25	3%	0.01	8	4	0.025	25	21	0.007
SBG	0	0		0	0		3	1	

Asian: $X^2(1,N=156) = 6.667$, Phi = -.816, p = 0.01; Minority: $X^2(1,N=156) = 5.000$, Phi = -.408, p = 0.03; White: $X^2(1,N=156) = 7.215$, Phi = -.249, p = 0.01

Specialty Center Choice

Table 6 indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between center-based gifted and school-based gifted students when choosing to attend one of the district's specialty centers. The results show 34% of the CBG students chose to attend one of the district's specialty centers, whereas 56% of the SBG students chose to attend a specialty center.

Table 6

CBG vs. SBG Specialty Center

	Specialty Center		
	%	n	p
CBG	34	34	0.006
SBG	56	31	

X^2 (1, N=156) = 7.55, Phi = .220, p = 0.01

Figure 5 shows the reasons that center-based gifted students cited for choosing to attend one of the district's specialty centers. Among the center-based gifted students, who chose to attend one of the school district's specialty centers, 18 of them noted their reason for attending was due to personal interest. On 10 occurrences it was noted that the specialty center chosen was within the students' normal, home-zoned high school. The factor of friends attending the specialty center was indicated in five responses, the indication that it would appeal to colleges occurred three times, the academic challenge occurred twice, and sibling attendance and electives' choices were noted once. One student believed the chosen specialty center would most closely mirror the center-based gifted program in which s/he was currently attending.

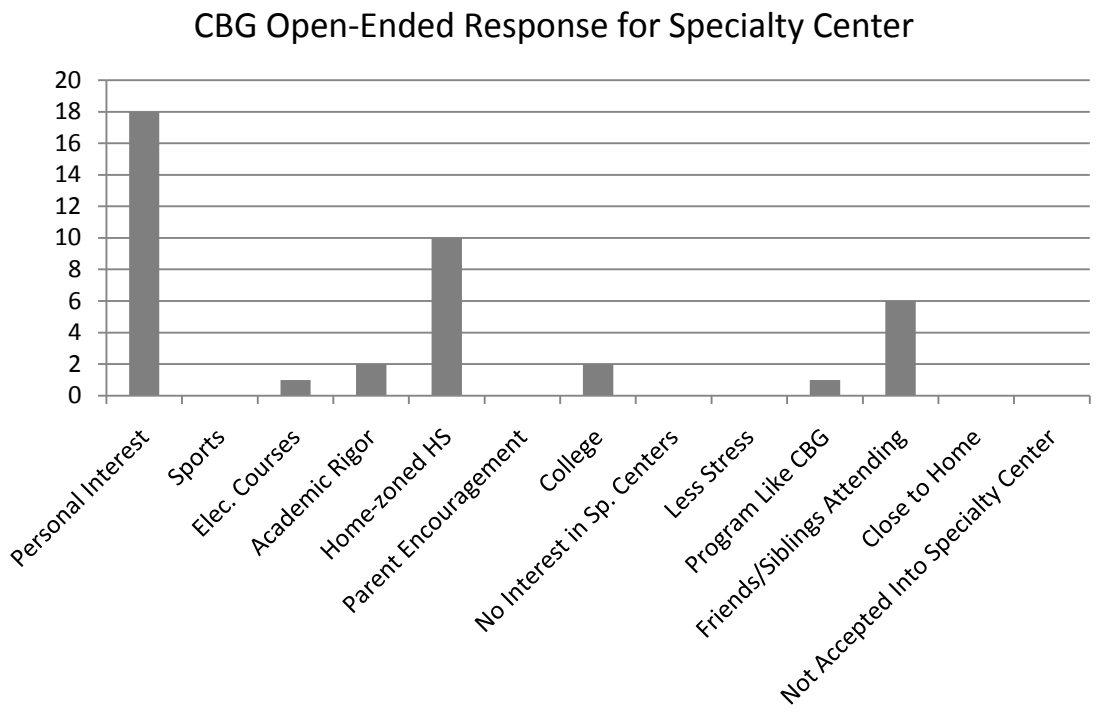

Figure 5. Center-based gifted open-ended responses for attending specialty centers.

Figure 6 shows the reasons school-based gifted students noted for choosing to attend one of the district's specialty centers. Among the school-based gifted students, who chose to attend one of the school district's specialty centers, 15 of them noted their reason for attending was due to personal interest. On seven occurrences it was noted that the specialty center was chosen due to parental encouragement. On three occasions it was indicated that the choice was being made because the specialty center was within the student's home-zoned school. On two occasions students noted that they were making this choice based on friends or siblings attending the program. Once it was indicated that the choice was being made because of the academic rigor, as well as one indication for smaller class sizes.

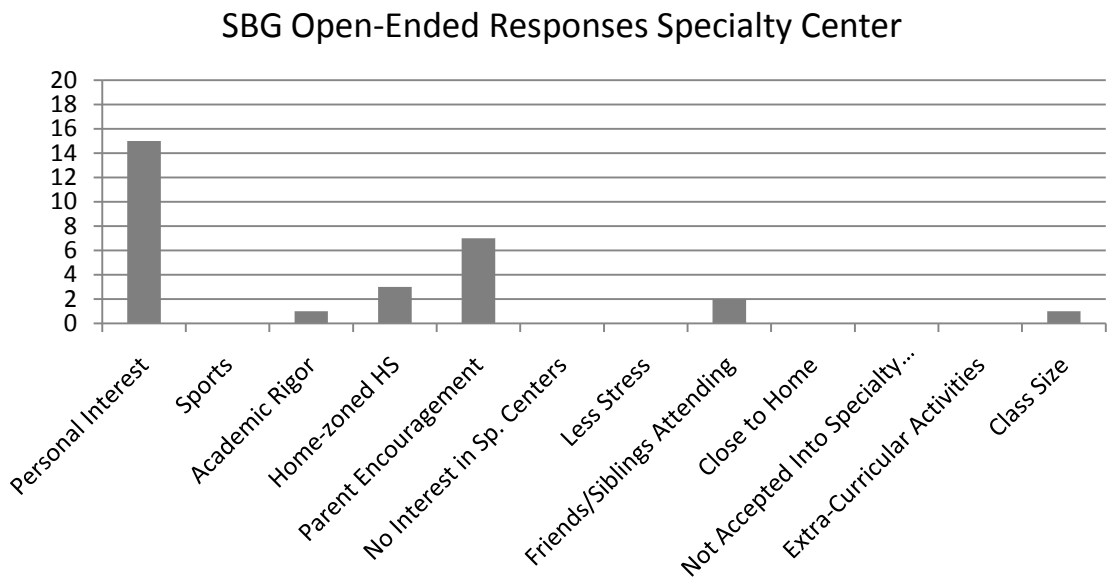

Figure 6. School-based gifted open-ended responses for choosing to attend a specialty center.

Gender and Specialty Center Choice

Table 7 shows that a statistically significant difference exists by gender within the middle school gifted programs in specialty center school selection. The crosstabs analysis indicated that 36% of the female CBG students chose to attend a specialty center, which is lower than the 56% of the SBG female students who chose to attend a specialty center. When researching the male students within each gifted middle school program, the data indicated that 31% of the male CBG students chose to attend a specialty center, and 57% of the males within the SBG population chose to attend a specialty center.

Table 7

Gender within MS Programs Specialty Center

	Female			Male		
	%	n	*P*	%	n	*p*
CBG	36	22	0.054	31	12	0.046
SBG	56	18		57	13	

Female: $X^2(1,N=156) = 3.72$, Phi = .199, p = 0.05; Male: $X^2(1,N=156) = 7.886$, Phi = .254, p = 0.05

Ethnicity and Specialty Center Choice

Table 8 shows the results between Asian, minority, and white students choosing to attend one of the district's specialty centers within each middle school gifted program. The Asian population in both CBG and SBG groups was very small; therefore meaningful analysis could not take place. Nonetheless, an analysis in SPSS did indicate a statistically significant difference exists among the Asians within the two middle school programs. No statistically significant differences were found between minorities and whites within the gifted middle school programs in the frequency of choosing to attend one of the district's specialty centers. The crosstabs analysis indicated that among the Asian center-based gifted population 20% chose to attend a specialty center, while 100% of the Asian school-based gifted population chose to attend a specialty center. Thirty-three percent of the minority students participating in the center-based gifted middle school program chose to attend a specialty center, and 61% of the school-based minority students chose to attend a specialty center. Finally, 35% of the white center-based gifted

students chose to attend a specialty center, and 47% of the white school-based gifted students chose to attend a specialty center.

Table 8

Ethnicity within MS Programs Specialty Center

	Asian			Minority			White		
	%	*n*	*P*	%	*n*	*P*	%	*n*	*p*
CBG	2	1	0.01	33	4	0.136	35	29	0.22
SBG	2	5		61	11		47	15	

Asian: $X^2(1,N=156) = 6.667$, Phi = .816, p = 0.01; Minority: $X^2(1,N=156) = 2.222$,Phi = .272, p = .136; White: $X^2(1,N=156) = 1.501$,Phi = .114, p = .220

Home High School Choice

Table 9 shows the results of their geographically, home-zoned high school choice, which indicated that a statistically significant difference does not exist between the frequency of students within the two middle school gifted programs choosing to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school. The crosstabs analysis indicated that 39% of the CBG students chose to attend his/her geographically, home-zoned high school, and 42% of the SBG students made the same decision.

Table 9

CBG vs. SBG Home High School

	Home High School		
	%	*n*	*p*
CBG	39	39	0.696
SBG	42	23	

X^2 (1, N=156) = .153, Phi = .031, p = 0.70

Figure 7 represents the final 39% of the center-based gifted students who chose to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school. Choosing this high school program because it was close to home was given as a reason 16 times by CBG students. In addition, it was noted 11 times that they were making this choice based on friends attending. Students indicated six times that they were selecting their home school because they were not accepted into the specialty center of their choice. On four occasions it was noted that the choice to attend the home-zoned high school was because of sports, and personal interest was also listed four times. Two responses indicated no interest in any of the specialty centers, three did not provide a reason, and one noted parental encouragement. The opportunity to experience more fun and less academic stress was noted three times.

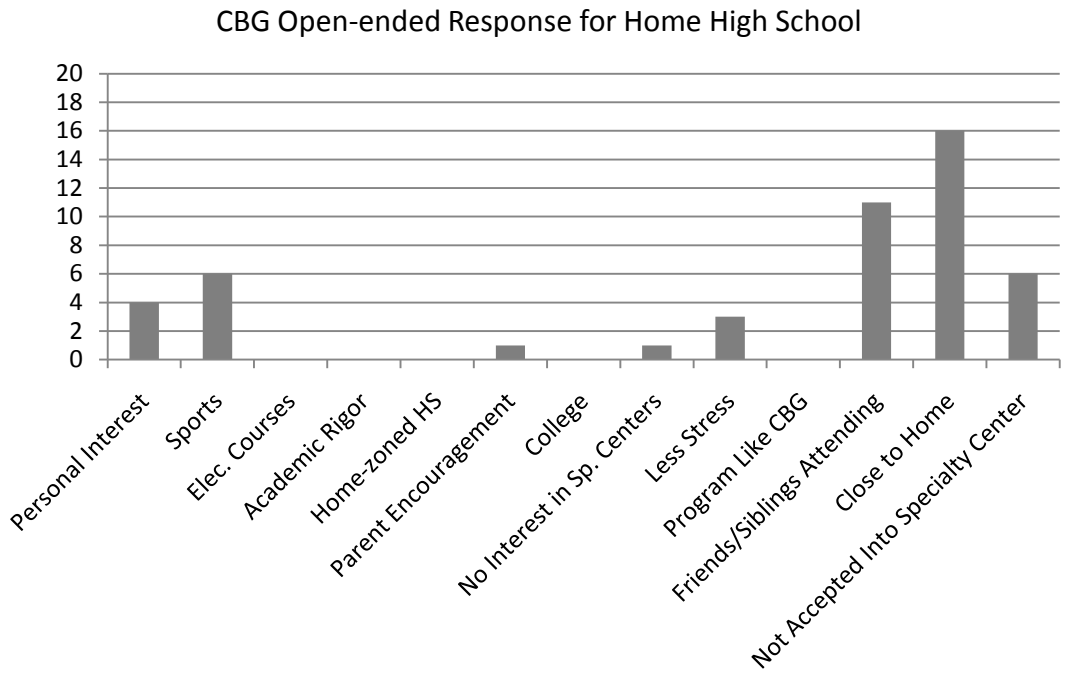

Figure 7. Center-based gifted open-ended responses for attending home high school.

Figure 8 depicts the reasons school-based gifted students provided as to why they chose to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school. Friends or siblings attending the home high school and the school being close to the student's home were each noted six times as the primary reasons for choosing to attend the home high school. Cited twice were the reasons of not being accepted into a specialty center and parental encouragement. Finally, having no interest in any of the specialty centers, sports, and less stress were each noted once as reasons SBG chose to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school.

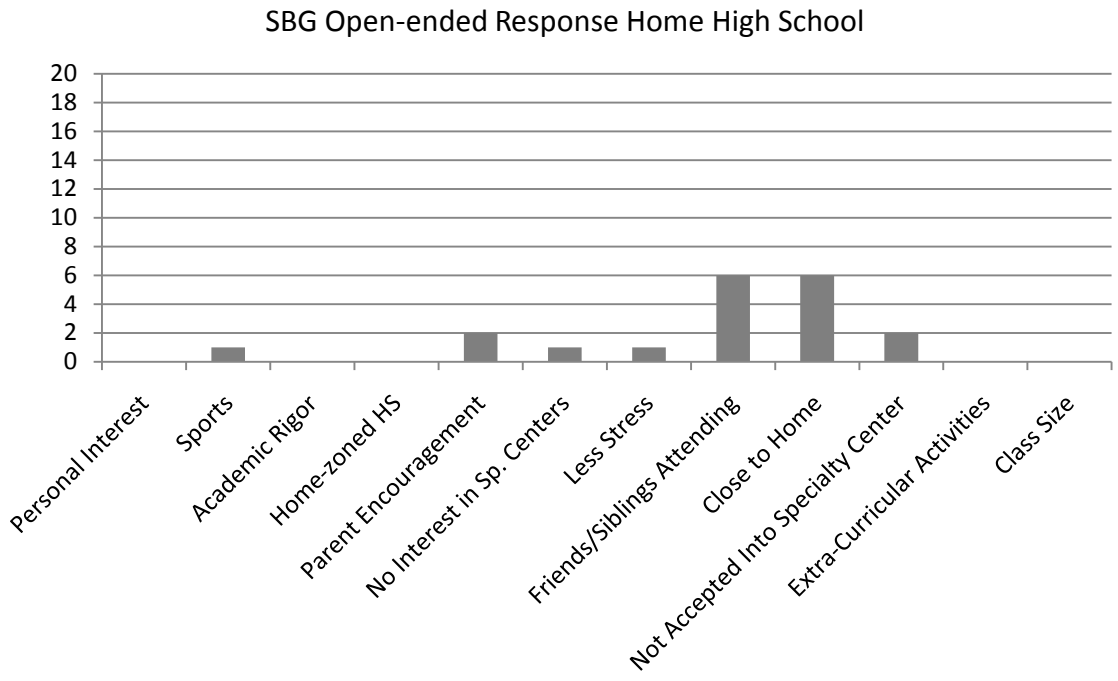

Figure 8. School-based gifted open-ended responses for choosing to attend home high school.

Gender and Home High School Choice

No statistically significant differences were found among gender within the two middle school gifted populations choosing to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school. Table 10 shows the results between female and male students choosing to attend his or her geographically, home-zoned high school. The crosstabs analysis indicated that 37% of the center-based gifted females and 41% of the school-based gifted females chose to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school. Among the male population of the two gifted middle school programs, 41% of the center-based gifted males and 44% of the school-based gifted males chose to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school.

Table 10

Gender with MS Programs Home High School

	Female			Male		
	%	n	*p*	%	n	*p*
CBG	37	23	0.739	1	16	0.85
SBG	41	13		44	10	

Female: X^2 (1, N=156) = .111,Phi = .034, p = 0.74; Male: X^2(1,N=156) = .036,Phi = .024, p = 0.85

Ethnicity and Home High School

Table 11 shows the results between CBG and SBG Asian, minority, and white students choosing to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school. No statistically significant differences exist among any of the ethnicities represented in the study within each middle school program choosing to attend the geographically home-zoned high school. The crosstabs analysis indicated none of the Asian population in either the center-based gifted or the school-based gifted population chose to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school. Among the minority population, 42% of the center-based gifted and 39% of the school-based gifted minority population chose to attend his/her home high school. The analysis of the white population indicated that 41% of the white center-based population and 50% of the white school-based population chose to attend his/her geographically, home-zoned high school.

Table 11

Ethnicity within MS Programs Home High School

	Asian			Minority			White		
	%	*n*	*p*	%	*n*	*p*	%	*n*	*p*
CBG	0	0		42	5		41	34	
			0			0.879			0.355
SBG	0	0		39	7		50	16	

Minority: $X^2(1,N=156) = 0.023$,Phi = -.028, p = .88; White: $X^2(1,N=156) = .857$, Phi =.086, p = .36

Differences Within Gifted Programs

Crosstabs analyses were conducted to determine if statistically significant differences among gender and ethnicities existed within each gifted middle school program regarding the high school program choices made. No statistically significant differences within the center-based gifted program existed among the genders and the different ethnic populations when making high school program choices. In addition, due to the low *n* within the school-based gifted population, no statistically significant differences could be found among gender and ethnicity in high school program choice.

Summary

In the initial phase of this study the frequency of high school program choices in which students from two different middle school gifted service options chose to attend

was analyzed. The frequency of high school program choices was also considered by gender and ethnicity within each gifted service option.

The final results indicated that a statistically significant difference exists between center-based gifted students and school-based gifted students when choosing to attend one the Regional Governor's schools. When expanding the analysis to consider difference within these two gifted middle school programs among gender statistically significant differences were found between the female and male populations who chose to attend one of the Regional Governor's schools. In addition, when considering this same choice of Regional Governor's schools, a statistically significant difference was found among all three ethnicities investigated in this study (Asian, minority, and white).

When considering the differences between the center-based gifted and school-based gifted middle school students who chose to attend one of the district's specialty centers, a statistically significant difference was found among the two different gifted middle school service options. In addition, when considering the choice of specialty center within these two gifted service options between female and male students a statistically significant difference was also found. However, when analyzing this choice among ethnicities within the two middle schools' gifted service options; results were only found to be statistically significantly different among the Asian population. No significant differences were found among the minority and white populations.

Lastly, the final results when considering the differences between the center-based gifted and the school-based gifted students who chose to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school revealed no statistically significant differences

between students in either middle school gifted service option. Expanding the analysis to look for differences among female and male students within the two gifted service options who chose to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school continued to result in no statistically significant differences. Finally, no statistically significant differences were found to exist among the three identified ethnicities within this study.

Part 2: Pre- and Post-Transition Perceptions

Research Question 2

2. Are there differences between center-based and school-based gifted students' pre-transition academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the ninth-grade, high school academic program?

Research Question 3

3. Are there differences between center-based and school-based gifted students' post-transition academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the ninth-grade, high school academic program?

Academic Indicator: Grades Earned

Perceptions of students' grades were used as a proxy of their grades. While perceptions of grades were self-reported, students did receive official report cards, which provided a basis for the perception of their grades. In the pre-transition survey, students were asked this question at the end of their eighth grade year, which meant they had received 11 school-issued report cards on which to base their perception of their grades.

In the post-transition survey students responded to this question within two-weeks of receiving their first quarter, school-issued report card. Students responded in four different indicators of: Mostly As, Mixed As and Bs, Mostly Bs, and Mixed Bs and Cs. These choices were re-coded with 4 = Mostly As, 3 = Mixed As and Bs, 2 = Mostly Bs, and 1 = Mixed Bs and Cs in order to generate the means in SPSS. There were no statistically significant differences in the mean ratings of grades between CBG and SBG students at the end of their eighth grade year as shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Pre-Transition Perceptions of Grades Earned

CBG		SBG			
n=101		*n*=56			
M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
3.19	0.83	3.40	0.56	-1.64	.10

Table 13 indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between the post transition perceptions of grades reported by CBG and SBG ($t = 2.80$, $p<.05$). CBG were more likely than SBG to report higher grades (CBG M = 3.56 v SBG M = 3). The effect size of this difference is 0.10, a small but meaningful effect ($\eta 2 = .10$).

Table 13

Post-Transition Perceptions of Grades Earned

CBG		SBG				
n=54		*n*=18				
M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*P*	η^2
3.56	0.72	3.00	0.77	2.80	0.01	.10

Pre/Post Academic Learning Perceptions

Academic learning was the common theme and name used to identify the questions that addressed CBG and SBG student's perceptions of academics both before and after transitioning into their chosen high school program. In order to ensure internal consistency of the academic construct being analyzed a Cronbach's Alpha was used, which demonstrated internal consistency reliability of this measure is .89 based on 31 questions. As demonstrated in Table 14 a statistically significant difference among the perceptions of academic learning exists between the CBG and SBG students. The mean rating (m = 3.24) of the CBG students demonstrates a high perception of anticipated academic learning prior to transition from the center-based gifted service option. The mean rating (m = 2.99) of the SBG students demonstrates a lower perception of the anticipated academic constructs prior to transition from the school-based gifted service

option. The effect size of the difference in pre-transition academic learning perception is 0.08, a small but meaningful effect (η2 = .08).

Table 14

Pre-Transition Perceptions of Academic Learning Component

CBG		SBG				
n=101		*n*=56				
M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*P*	η^2
3.24	0.41	2.99	0.40	3.67	0.00	.08

Note. Perceptions were based on a 4-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree).

Table 15 demonstrates that there was no statistically significant difference found among the perceptions of academic learning between CBG and SBG students post-transition (t = 1.25, p>.05). The mean rating (m = 3.14) of the CBG students demonstrates a high perception of the academic constructs post transition to their chosen high school academic program. The mean rating (m = 2.99) of the SBG students demonstrates a slightly lower, but still high perception of the academic constructs post transition to their chosen high school academic program from the school-based gifted service option.

Table 15

Post-Transition Perceptions of Academic Learning Component

CBG		SBG			
n=54		*n*=18			
M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*P*
3.14	.46	2.99	0.30	1.25	0.22

Note. Perceptions were based on a 4-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree).

Pre/Post Organizational Safety Perceptions

Organizational safety was the common theme and name used to identify the questions that addressed CBG and SBG student's perceptions of their program's organization both before and after transitioning into their chosen high school program. In order to ensure internal consistency of the organizational construct being analyzed a Cronbach's Alpha was used, which demonstrated internal consistency reliability of this measure is .89 based on 32 questions. Table 16 shows that a statistically significant difference exists among the pre-transition perceptions of organizational safety between the CBG and SBG students ($t = 2.56$, $p<.05$). The mean rating ($m = 3.00$) of the CBG students demonstrates a high perception of the anticipated organizational safety component prior to transition from the center-based gifted service option. The mean rating ($m = 2.82$) of the SBG students demonstrates a slightly lower perception of the anticipated organizational safety prior to transition from the school-based gifted service

option. The effect size of the difference in pre-transition organizational safety perception is 0.04, which is considered a small effect (η2 = .04).

Table 16

Pre-Transition Perceptions of Organizational Safety Component

CBG *n*=101		SBG *n*=56				
M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*	η^2
3.00	.44	2.82	0.42	2.56	.01	.04

Note. Perceptions were based on a 4-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree).

Table 17 shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of organizational safety between center-based gifted and school-based gifted students post-transition. The mean rating (m = 3.13) of the CBG students demonstrates a high perception of the organizational safety component post transition to their chosen high school academic program. The mean rating (m = 2.94) of the SBG students demonstrates a slightly lower perception of the organizational safety component post transition to their chosen high school academic program.

Table 17

Post-Transition Perceptions of Organizational Safety Component

CBG		SBG			
n=54		*n*=18			
M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
3.13	0.38	2.94	0.29	1.91	.060

Note. Perceptions were based on a 4-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree).

Pre/Post Social Friends' Perceptions

Social friends' was the common theme and name used to identify the questions that addressed CBG and SBG student's perceptions of their program's social constructs both before and after transitioning into their chosen high school program. In order to ensure internal consistency of the social construct being analyzed a Cronbach's Alpha was used, which demonstrated internal consistency reliability of this measure is .839 based on 21 questions. Table 18 indicates that a statistically significant difference exists between CBG and SBG students' perceptions of social friends prior to transition to their chosen high school program ($t = 3.21$, $p<.05$).The mean rating ($m = 3.10$) of the CBG students demonstrates a high perception of the anticipated social friends component prior to transition from the center-based gifted service option. The mean rating ($m = 2.81$) of the SBG students demonstrates a slightly lower perception of the anticipated social friends component prior to transition from the school-based gifted service option. The

effect size of the difference in pre-transition organizational safety perception is 0.06, which is consider a small effect (η2 = .06).

Table 18

Pre-Transition Perceptions of Social Friends Component

CBG		SBG				
n=101		*n*=56				
M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*	η^2
3.10	0.47	2.81	0.64	3.21	.002	.06

Note. Perceptions were based on a 4-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree).

No statistically significant difference was found in the post-transition perceptions of social friends between the center-based gifted students and the school-based gifted students as demonstrated in Table 19 (t = 1.244, p>.05). The mean rating (m = 3.06) of the CBG students demonstrates a high perception of the social constructs for social friends post transition to their chosen high school academic program from the center-based gifted service option. The mean rating (m = 2.96) of the SBG students, though slightly lower, also demonstrates a high perception of the social constructs for social friends post transition to their chosen high school academic program from the school-based gifted service option.

Table 19

Post-Transition Perceptions of Social Friends Component

CBG		SBG			
n=54		*n*=18			
M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
3.06	0.39	2.93	0.38	1.22	0.23

Note. Perceptions were based on a 4-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree).

Summary

Middle school to high school transition perceptions of gifted middle school students, who received gifted services during middle school in either a homogenously grouped service option (CBG) or a heterogeneously grouped service option (SBG) were examined. I considered the perceptions of the high school transition within three sub-categories of transition: academic constructs, organizational constructs, and social constructs. Several statistically significant differences were found in the pre-transition data within all three constructs. Specifically CBG students demonstrated a higher, more favorable pre-transition perception of the academic, organizational, and social constructs of the chosen high school academic program. Within the academic construct of pre-transition perceptions, grades earned by students were shown to have no statistical significant difference between CBG and SBG students.

However, the only statistically significant difference found within the academic, organizational, and social constructs of the post-transition perception was that of students' perceptions of their grades. Within this academic construct the CBG students demonstrated a continued high perception of their grades earned, where the SBG students perceive a decrease in the grades they earned post transition. While no statistically significant differences were found with regard to the general academic, organizational, and social constructs between the CBG and SBG students in the post-transition survey, there is a slightly lower perception demonstrated by the SBG students in all three constructs.

Chapter 5

Introduction

The intent of this study was to examine the high school program choice trends and the pre- and post-transition perceptions of center-based gifted and school-based gifted students as they moved from middle school to high school. The purpose was first to discover if a difference in high school program choices existed between center-based gifted middle school students and school-based gifted middle school students. Once the high school program decision was made, the second purpose of this study was to determine if a difference in pre-transition and post-transition perceptions of their high school program choice existed between the two groups. This study was based on quantitative survey results of eighth grade middle school students who had received three consecutive years of gifted services in either a center-based (homogenously grouped) setting or school-based (heterogeneously grouped) setting within a single school division in Central Virginia. Research questions were developed to identify the frequency of high school program choices among the center-based and school-based gifted middle school students, and to distinguish the pre-transition and post-transition perceptions of students within three constructs (academic, organizational, and social) of the chosen high school program. The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the patterns of high school academic program choices of gifted middle school students?
   A) What are the patterns among center-based gifted?
   B) What are the patterns among school-based gifted?

2. Are there differences between center-based and school-based gifted students' pre-transition academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the ninth-grade, high school academic program?
3. Are there differences between center-based and school-based gifted students' post-transition academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the ninth-grade, high school academic program?

Significant Findings

Frequency Differences in High School Program Choice between Gifted Service Options

Regional Governors' Schools Choice.

The results in Chapter 4 show statistically significant differences between the high school program choices made by center-based gifted students and school-based gifted students. A Chi-square significance test was used to identify if significant differences existed between frequencies of the two groups' high school program choices. The Chi-square test for the difference in frequency of center-based gifted students and school-based gifted students who chose to attend one the regional Governor's schools indicated that there is a significant difference. Among the 101 center-based gifted students who responded to the pre-transition survey, 28 of these students indicated that they were attending one of the regional Governor's schools, which exceeded the expected attendance count of 18.8. Among the 55 school-based gifted students who responded to the pre-transition survey, only 1 of these students indicated s/he was attending a regional Governor's school, which was lower than the expected count of 10.2. Statistically

significant differences within the two middle school service options choosing to attend a regional Governor's school were also indicated within female and male populations The chi-square significance test indicated that center-based gifted female students exceeded the expected Governor's school attendance count of 11.9 by having 17 students attend, unlike the female school-based population that had only one student choose to attend with an expected count of 6.1 students. The male center-based gifted population also exceeded its expected attendance count of 6.9 students by having 11 male students choose to attend one of the regional Governor's schools. Finally, among the three ethnic populations of Asians, minorities and whites, statistically significant differences were found within both gifted service options across the Asian, minority and white populations. The chi-square significance test indicated that four of the Asian students in the center-based gifted program attended a regional Governor's school, which exceeded the expected count of only two students. The school-based gifted population also reported five Asian students; however, none of these students chose to attend one of the regional Governor's schools, and the expected attendance count was two.

The pre-transition survey provided students with an optional open-ended question asking to explain why they made the decision to attend one of the regional Governor's schools. The most frequent reason provided by CBG students was personal interest in the academic focus of the Governor's school, and the second most frequent reason was academic challenge. While only one school-based gifted student chose to attend a regional Governor's school, personal interest and parental encouragement were the main reasons this student gave for choosing to attend a regional Governor's school.

Specialty Centers Choice

The Chi-square test for the difference in frequency of center-based gifted students and school-based gifted students who chose to attend one of the district's specialty centers indicated that there is a statistically significant difference. Among the 101 center-based gifted students who responded to the pre-transition survey, 34 of these students indicated that they were attending one of the district's specialty centers, indicating less than the expected attendance count of 42.1 students. Among the 55 school-based gifted students who responded to the pre-transition survey, 31 indicated that they were attending one of the district's specialty centers, which exceeded the expected attendance count of 22.9 students. The statistically significant difference between the female and male populations within the two gifted service options who chose to attend one of the district's specialty centers was slight, but it did exist. The chi-square significance test indicated that center-based gifted female students attending a specialty center count was 22, which was slightly less than the expected count of 26.4. However, the females in the school-based gifted middle school program indicated 18 female students choosing to attend a specialty center, which was higher than the expected count of 13.6. The male center-based gifted population choosing to attend a specialty center was 12, which was also slightly less than the expected count of 15.7. Also like the female school-based population, the male school-based population attendance count of 13 choosing to attend one of the specialty centers is slightly higher than the expected count of 9.3. Finally, among the three ethnic populations of Asians, minorities and whites, statistically significant differences were only found within the Asian center-based gifted and school-

based populations who chose to attend a specialty center. Within this ethnic population, one of the Asian center-based gifted students chose to attend a specialty center, whereas the expected count was three. In addition, five of the school-based gifted Asian population chose to attend a specialty center with the expected count only being three.

Again, the pre-transition survey provided students with an optional open-ended question asking to explain why they made the decision to attend one of the district's specialty centers. Like the center-based gifted students choosing to attend a regional governor's school, the most noted explanation from the center-based gifted students who chose to respond to the open-ended question was that of personal interest in the academic focus of the specialty center. The second most noted reason for attending a specialty center from the center-based population was that the specialty center was close to home and part of their geographically, home-zoned high school. The school-based gifted students' most noted reason for attending one of the district's specialty centers reflected that of the center-based gifted in that they primarily made the choice based on personal interest. However, unlike the center-based gifted students the second most noted reason for attending was that of parental encouragement.

Geographically Home-zoned High Schools Choice

The Chi-square test for the difference in frequency of center-based gifted students and school-based gifted students who chose to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school indicated no statistically significant differences between the two gifted service options, as well as no statistically significant differences between females and males or the three ethnic populations.

Results from the open-ended question that asked students to explain their decision in choosing to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school indicated different reasons for this choice between the center-based gifted students and the school-based gifted students. Among the center-based gifted responses it was most noted that these students were making the decision because it was close to home. They also indicated that the choice was being made because many of their friends were attending the geographically, home-zoned high school. The school-based gifted students indicated the same reasons as the center-based gifted students, but their ordering was reversed. School-based gifted students indicated that their primary reason for choosing to attend their geographically, home-zoned high school was to be with their friends and their second most noted reason for attending was that it was close to home.

Implications and Discussions for Program Choices

Findings in this study regarding the center-based gifted students who chose to attend one of the regional governor's schools support those found within Phillip's and Lindsay's (2006) study regarding academic motivation for gifted students. Their study indicated that gifted students desired a high level of challenge when attending secondary schools. As noted in the open-ended responses given by these students, many chose to attend a regional Governor's school because they had heightened perception of the academic challenge. Based on a significant response by center-based gifted students in their choice to attend one of the regional Governor's school than the school-based gifted, it might be possible that this group of students was influenced within their middle school gifted program to view the Governor's schools as having a more challenging academic

program than what the district's specialty centers or geographically, home-zoned high schools have to offer. These findings should indicate to educational leaders that increasing the rigor in their academic programs and publicizing the opportunities of greater academic challenge within their schools might increase the number of high-achieving gifted students choosing to attend their school instead of seeking outside opportunities.

Recognizing that the percentage of center-based gifted students who chose to attend one of the district's specialty centers was slightly lower than the school-based gifted students who chose to attend one of the district's specialty centers, it is still important to see that the results of this study indicated a high number of gifted students choosing to attend one of the district's specialty centers. This finding supports the results within Buchanan and Woerner's (2002) study that gifted students preferred to choose high school academic programs that had a focused curriculum. Some of the appealing characteristics that Buchanan and Woerner found in these chosen high school programs were the opportunity to learn in small community environments (2002). Different from the comprehensive high-school, the schools of choice had curriculum that were designed around a focused, nontraditional theme or experience; this meant that the school did not try to be accommodating to all students with various interests, it was targeted just for students who had an interest in the particular theme or experience. The study also found that students in these chosen learning environments believed they had more voice in the development of the curriculum and their learning (2002). Personal interest for choosing to attend one of the district's specialty centers was noted by both the center-based and

school-based gifted population. This finding confirms that gifted students desire an education that builds upon something that interests them. In addition, if we were to assume that both the Governor's schools and the specialty centers were offering students more rigor and a curriculum that addresses gifted students' individual learning interests, the these findings would further support Sheppard and Kanevsky (1999) who found that ideal instruction for the gifted needed to involve higher level content which matches or nearly matches their achievement levels, faster paced instruction, and enrichment which extends the boundaries of study or investigation to topics not typically addressed in the regular mainstream curriculum. They felt that ideal instruction would be challenging and provide gifted youth opportunities to test the limits of their talent and ability through daily interaction with other gifted youth.

Pre- and Post-Transition Perceptions

Academic Constructs: Grades and Learning

As reported in the results from the previous chapter there is a statistically significant difference in the post-transition perceptions of the grades being earned by center-based gifted students and school-based gifted students. An independent t-test, with a $\eta 2$ to determine the effect size, was used to find statistically significant differences between the perceptions of center-based gifted and school-based gifted grades earned before and after transitioning into their chosen high school program. Statistically significant differences between the grades earned perceptions prior to transitioning into the chosen high school program were not found. However, in the post-transition

perceptions of the grades earned, statistically significant differences were found. The mean rating (m = 3.56) of the center-based gifted students demonstrates a continued high perception of grades earned post-transition into their chosen high school academic program. The mean rating (m = 3.00) of the school-based gifted students while still a high perception of grades earned post-transition, does indicate that the school-based gifted students' perceptions of their grades are lower than that of the center-based gifted students. Therefore, mean ratings for post-transition grades earned perception data were found to be statistically significantly different between center-based gifted students and school-based gifted students ($t = 2.80$, $p<.05$).

Also found in the results from Chapter 4 was a statistically significant difference in the pre-transition perceptions of the academic construct of learning between the center-based gifted students and the school-based gifted students. Each of the academic construct questions for the pre-transition survey and the post-transition survey were analyzed for item correlation by completing a factor analysis. The mean rating (m = 3.24) of the CBG students demonstrates a high perception of the anticipated academic constructs prior to transition from the center-based gifted service option. The mean rating (m = 2.99) of the SBG students demonstrates a lower perception of the anticipated academic constructs prior to transition from the school-based gifted service option. Mean ratings for pre-transition academic constructs for the academic learning component perception data indicated a statistically significant difference between center-based gifted students and school-based gifted students prior to transitioning ($t = 3.67$, $p<.05$).

Pre/Post Transition Organization Construct Data

The results from Chapter 4 indicated a statistically significant difference in the pre-transition perceptions of the organizational construct of organizational safety between the center-based gifted students and the school-based gifted students. Each of the organizational construct questions for the pre-transition survey and the post-transition survey were analyzed for item correlation by completing a factor analysis. The mean rating (m = 3.00) of the CBG students demonstrates a high perception of the anticipated organizational constructs for the organizational safety component prior to transition from the center-based gifted service option. The mean rating (m = 2.82) of the SBG students demonstrates a slightly lower perception of the anticipated organizational constructs for organizational safety prior to transition from the school-based gifted service option. Mean ratings for pre-transition organizational constructs perception data indicated a statistically significant difference between center-based gifted students and school-based gifted students ($t = 2.56$, $p<.05$).

Pre/Post Transition Social Construct Data

The results from Chapter 4 indicated a statistically significant difference in the pre-transition perceptions of social construct of the social friends' component between the center-based gifted students and the school-based gifted students. Each of the social construct questions for the pre-transition survey and the post-transition survey were analyzed for item correlation by completing a factor analysis. The mean rating (m = 3.10) of the CBG students demonstrates a high perception of the anticipated social constructs of the social friends component prior to transition from the center-based gifted service

option. The mean rating (m = 2.81) of the SBG students also demonstrates a slightly lower perception of the anticipated social constructs for social friends component prior to transition from the school-based gifted service option. Mean ratings for pre-transition social constructs for the social friends component perception data indicated a statistically significant difference between center-based gifted students and school-based gifted students ($t = 3.21$, $p<.05$).

Implications and Discussions of Pre/Post Transition Perceptions

Prior to transitioning into high school center-based gifted students had a higher academic, organizational, and social perception of high school than the school-based gifted students. In addition, after transitioning into high school, the center-based gifted students continued to have a high perception of the grades they earned. Also it was found that more of the center-based gifted students chose to attend a regional Governor's school than the school-based gifted students, meaning that more students of like grouping and ability stayed together during post-transition than not. Sims and Crenshaw (2002) found that gifted students who are exposed regularly only to peers of like ability also tend to develop faster and greater cognitive abilities. The findings in this study appear to support Sims and Crenshaw's (2002) findings in that the center-based gifted students had been grouped together for three consecutive years during middle school and demonstrated higher perceptions of grades, and a higher perception of the constructs within the school than the school-based gifted group which had not been "exposed regularly" to the same level of peers on a regular basis. The findings also suggest that the center-based gifted students might be in an academic setting where they are being appropriately challenged

and are with more students of the same ability level, as they were when they were in their center-based gifted middle school program. This is shown within the trend data which established that more center-based gifted students chose to attend a regional Governor's school, and they noted doing so because of personal interest and academic challenge. Finally, Fielder and Lange (1993) implied students who are not in a like-ability group environment may not feel the same motivation to do well academically and will not demonstrate the same level of achievement growth. This study found that more school-based gifted students chose to attend one of the specialty centers. The findings of this study support this idea when considering the lower grade perception from the school-based gifted students who may not have chosen an environment that surrounded them with students who were of like-ability, thereby not motivating them to achieve at their full potential. Given the high number of school-based students who chose to attend specialty centers, it could be inferred that these findings support the results of Schiller (1999) who found that gifted students who moved away from their peer-base to attend different high schools did not achieve as well.

When considering the less positive views of the school-based gifted students regarding their perceptions of the three constructs than those of the center-based gifted students one might infer that this supports some of the results found in Kulik and Kulik's meta-analysis (1992), which found gifted students who had been grouped homogenously to be more confident than those who had been grouped heterogeneously. When students were administered the pre-transition survey their responses were based on personal intuition and perception. The results of the test indicated that prior to transition the

center-based gifted students had a higher perception to the three constructs, which they had not experienced, than the school-based gifted students. The higher perceptions indicate an elevated confidence among these students. The center-based gifted students might be demonstrating the confidence they have in the academic development they have received and anticipate an extension of that learning based on perceptions of the high school program choices they made. This could indicate to educational leaders that greater promotion of academics within the school-based gifted program might improve these students' confidence and academic perceptions of what is to come when they make the transition into high school.

As students consider the social aspects of transitioning to high school the findings of this study support Schiller (1999) who found a significant impact of the importance of peer relationships among the gifted students. Schiller found that middle school students who transition into high school with a significant number of their peers were minimally negatively impacted academically. Among the center-based gifted students in this finding, more chose to attend one of the regional Governor's schools, thus remaining with their established peer group or understanding that they would be transitioning into a similar peer group. However, the negative impact increased for middle school students who transitioned into a high school where fewer of their middle school classmates were in attendance. Given that a large number of school-based gifted students planned to attend one of the district's specialty centers, thus separating from their established peer-base, it could be inferred that school-based students were feeling more apprehensive

about attending a school where they were less familiar with the people and would have to establish new friendships.

Limitations of the Study

In researching the pre- and post- transition perceptions of gifted middle school students coming from two different gifted service options, study participants came from a single school division in Central Virginia. The school division is one of the largest in Virginia, containing 14 comprehensive middle schools and 10 comprehensive high schools. All of the comprehensive middle schools provided gifted services heterogeneously grouped class settings, and four middle schools offered a center-based setting that provide homogenously grouped classes to gifted students. Upon leaving either of the gifted middle school service options the students had the opportunity to apply to attend one of two regional Governor's schools, 11 different specialty centers within the district, or they could attend their geographically, home-zoned high school. Because only one school district was used for this study the generalizability of the results are limited to a similar school district. However, moderately sized school districts or rural school districts who are considering different service options gifted middle and high school students might find the results informative in their decision making process.

The timing of the administration of the pre-transition survey may have influenced the response rate, thus making it a limitation of this study. The pre-transition survey was initially administered to students during their eighth grade English class at the end of the school year. At the time of the administration students had just completed several Standards of Learning assessments and had only two weeks before leaving school for

summer vacation. This seemed to have diminished the importance, seriousness, and desire of students to want to complete what might have been viewed as another assessment, therefore few surveys were returned. The survey was then mailed and opened-up online for students to complete during the summer months. Again, this created a limitation as many students are not focused on academic tasks during the summer. The mailed pre-transition surveys also required students to return them by mail.

The sample size for the pre- and post-transition survey was small, creating a limitation with generalizability to larger gifted populations. In addition to the overall small sample size, the post-transition sample size was extremely small, and is most likely the reason for no statistically significant differences being found in the post-transition perceptions of the academic, organizational, and social constructs. Post-transition surveys were mailed only to those students who completed a pre-transition survey. Reminder notifications and an online version were provided to these students; however, many chose not to respond to the post-transition survey. The timing of this survey administration may have had something to do with the low response rate as surveys were mailed at the end of the first quarterly marking period, which corresponds closely with the Thanksgiving and winter holidays.

The self-selection process regarding which high school program to attend may be viewed as a limitation of this study. Students self-selected whether or not to apply to a Governor's school, specialty center, or to enter their geographically zoned home high school. They also self-selected whether or not they would actually attend any of these programs if they were accepted. Since students were self-selecting the extraneous

influences that may impact their decision making process could not be controlled. In addition, there may be extenuating circumstances such as transportation, family responsibilities, or other outside commitments that could have limited or impacted the available opportunities and, therefore, could not be controlled.

Finally, because the students self-reported their data, particularly their perceptions of grades, could be considered a limitation of this study. This study, however, asked for students to self-report grades at a time that was very close to receiving official grades at the end of a marking period, therefore students having to guess as to what their grades actually were was minimized.

Recommendations for Further Research

Statistically significant differences were found in the frequency of high school program choices made by center-based gifted students and by school-based gifted students. Center-based gifted students were clearly more likely to first choose a regional Governor's school followed by one of the district's specialty centers in their program choices. The reasons that these students noted most for making these choices were mainly because of personal interest and second for academic rigor. In comparison, the school-based gifted students did not choose the Governor's schools, but did choose the specialty centers most often and cited personal interest and parental encouragement for their choice. When considering this information, it is my opinion that there is something happening within the center-based gifted program that guides the students toward schools that require an application process and create a more rigorous academic perception. However, based on the open-ended responses provided by the school-based gifted

students it would seem that within the SBG program the students are making their choices not based on advertisement and “in school” promotion, but strictly on their interests and the research or perceptions their parents have of the various specialty programs. It seems that the center-based program is purposefully preparing their students toward a more “college-like” application process, whereas the school-based program might not promote academics beyond their program. This is one possible explanation of this choice difference, and not something researched, therefore without additional research it cannot be confirmed. It is, however, something that would be of interest for further research. In addition, a qualitative, in-depth study as to why these choices were made and what influences the gifted service option had in helping to shape these studies is needed in order to determine why these differences exist.

The difference in perceptions of grades earned is also of interest and could lead to further research investigations. It is interesting to note that prior to transitioning into high school both sets of gifted students perceived the grades that they had earned to be high and fairly similar. However, once they transitioned the center-based gifted continued their high perception, but the school-based gifted students’ perception of their earned grades dropped. One explanation of this could be that while participating in their middle school gifted program the teachers of the school-based gifted students taught the curriculum at a lower instructional level because of the mixed population of high achieving honors and gifted students. Therefore, the academic challenge was not present for the students, making the high grades easy for these students to earn. In addition, being that the school-based gifted teachers were aware of the gifted status of the student, the

teacher may have graded the students' work with a bias toward the student allowing for higher assessment of work. In the center-based gifted program the classes are homogenously grouped with all gifted students. Therefore, the teacher may not have to worry about the delivery of instruction meeting higher and lower learning needs, but instead can direct the instruction at a higher, more rigorous level. When the center-based gifted teacher assesses the students' work the teacher will not expect a higher quality of work from gifted students because all of the students are functioning at a gifted level. This theory supports Bernal's (2003) findings of teachers of like-ability grouped students being more able to design instruction that focuses on individual academic needs, making instruction more conducive for individualized, high-academic focus. When the two groups of students transition into high school the gifted label does not follow them since there is not a program created solely for gifted students like the center-based gifted program. Gifted students are simply placed into honor's level classes. For the school-based gifted student the new high school teacher may not approach instruction for the lower end of the classroom, thus creating an academic struggle for the school-based gifted student, causing his/her grades to fall. This idea was also supported in Monaco's (2008) study, which found that teachers of multi-ability classes lower the standards for the gifted students and teach these students using the standards applicable for the non-gifted population. This is further supported in Sims and Crenshaw's (2002) study that found when gifted students are not appropriately challenged within their academic instruction they become bored or frustrated, failing to reach their maximum potential. In addition, the high school student may not be aware of the gifted label and will assess all

work without the bias of the gifted lens. Conversely, the center-based gifted student has been accustomed to a challenging academic program, and doesn't find the work as hard. Therefore his/her grades remain high after s/he transitions into high school. Recognizing that there is a difference in the grades that each group earns after they transition into high school should be of interest to researchers and school administrators who would want to know the differences in grading practices and academic rigor between the center-based gifted and the school-based gifted students.

When considering the perceptions of gifted populations as they transition from middle school to high school, it would be informative to also consider the perceptions of other key stakeholders who are involved with the gifted students such as their parents and their teachers. This study was conducted using only a modified version of Smith, Akos, Lim, and Wiley's (2008) student survey: *Perceptions of Transition Survey*. Smith, Akos, Lim, and Wiley also conducted interviews with parents, teachers, counselors and administrators of the general middle school population that was transitioning into high school. In order to discovering more regarding the influences on the gifted middle school students it would be beneficial to conduct the full scope of the research by interviewing the parents, teachers, counselors and administrators of these students.

In addition to the views of stakeholders involved with the gifted students as they transition, further research regarding the actual facilitation of gifted students transitioning into high school should be considered for future research. This study found that there is a difference in the perceptions of the gifted students from the two service options before they transitioned, however, after they transitioned the statistically significant difference

no longer existed between the two. Certainly the small sample size could be the cause of there not being a difference; however, this could also be an indicator that both the center-based and the school-based gifted students' perceptions changed once they made the transition because the appropriate plan for facilitating their transition was not in place. Future research should then consider what would be the appropriate plan to facilitate an effective and supportive transition for gifted students.

Finally, little research exists that prepares parents of gifted students in working with their gifted children and helping them move through middle and high school. As seen in the open-ended responses given by the school-based gifted students, many made their high school program choice based on parental encouragement. Recognizing that parents do help students make these important decisions, it would be important to for future research to explore how parents learn about the choices students have to make and the communication methods that best inform parents.

Conclusions

The high school program choices that gifted middle school students from two different middle school gifted service options make and the reasons that influence these choices is interesting to consider as educational policymakers and program designers seek to better understand what the high achieving students desire in their educational program. In addition, the perceptions of these choices as they transition into their high school program is interesting to consider as many school districts, because of implications in The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, spend much of their time focusing

on the needs of their identified “at-risk”, and national data continue to reveal that our public schools are not challenging our students with rigorous curriculum and requirements. As educators continue to look for alternative ways to reach those who are struggling in classes it appears that the high-achieving students are not getting the attention they need and are being left to make important academic choices on their own.

Using the results from this study one can draw the conclusions that gifted students, no matter if they receive center-based or school-based gifted services in middle school are more likely to make high school program choices that address their personal learning interests. However, the center-based gifted students appear to go beyond just personal interest and choose high school programs that offer them a perceived academic challenge such as that found in a regional Governor’s school. In addition, gifted students who are heterogeneously grouped also desire a high school academic program that addresses their personal interests like those found in high school specialty centers.

Finally, based on the perceptions of grades earned prior to transitioning into high school, all gifted students appear to thrive academically in the middle grades, but those who have not been grouped in a homogenous setting for their gifted services may need additional academic supports in place upon making the transition into high school. This is important for educators to recognize the needs of gifted students, specifically those who were not part of a homogenously grouped middle school program, before they enter the high school program in order to ensure they do not become frustrated because they do not perceive their grades to be as high as they were in their middle school program.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Parent/Participant Notification of Study Letter

June 1, 2010

Dear Parent of CCPS Gifted/Honors' 8th Grader,

I am inviting your child to participate in a research project to study the academic, organizational, and social perceptions of gifted middle school students before and after they transition into high school. This study is being conducted as part of the requirements for a Virginia Commonwealth University doctoral degree and is not part of Chesterfield County Public Schools.

Your child is eligible to participate in this study because your child is an honors level or gifted student enrolled in Chesterfield County Public Schools and will be transitioning into a high school academic program following their 8th grade school year.

The purpose of this study is to investigate high achieving students' perceptions of the transition process from middle to high school and to examine whether their perception of the chosen high school program's ability to meet their individual needs.

This study will take place during the middle-to-high school transition period which occurs at the end of your child's eighth grade year and continues into the first quarter of his/her ninth grade year. Your child will receive a Pre-Transition Survey during his/her 8th grade English class and will receive a Post-Transition Survey in the fall during his/her 9th grade English class.

To my knowledge there are no known risks associated with this research. As a result of participation in this research, it is possible that your child may obtain a greater awareness of the transition experience and therefore be able to look for additional support to ease the transition process.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child completing the survey or about his/her participating in this study, you may contact me at **594-1761**. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Commonwealth University has approved this study. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a participant in this study, you may contact:

Office for Research
Virginia Commonwealth University
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 113
P.O. Box 980568
Richmond, VA 23298
Telephone: 804-827-2157

After you have reviewed the permission form and the student assent form, and you are comfortable with your understanding of the study being conducted, please sign and return the consent form to your son/daughter's English teacher by **June 4, 2010**, if you choose to allow them to participate in the study.

Sincerely,

Randi Smith
Student Researcher, VCU

Appendix B

Parent Information and Consent Form

TITLE: GIFTED STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

VCU IRB NO.: HM12947

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the study staff to explain any words that you do not clearly understand. You may take home an unsigned copy of this consent form to think about or discuss with family or friends before making your decision.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

You are invited to permit your child to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not to allow your child to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Your child is eligible to participate in this study because your child is a honors level or gifted student enrolled in Chesterfield County Public Schools, and will be transitioning into a high school academic program following their 8th grade school year.

The purpose of this study is to investigate high achieving students' perceptions of the transition process from middle to high school and to examine whether their perception of the chosen high school program's ability to meet their individual needs.

This study is being conducted as part of the requirements for a Virginia Commonwealth University doctoral degree. It is *not* a Chesterfield County Public Schools study.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR [YOUR CHILD'S] INVOLVEMENT

If you decide to permit your child to be in this research study, you will be asked to sign this permission form after you have had all your questions answered and understand what will happen to your child.

This study will take place during the middle-to-high school transition period, which occurs at the end of your child's eighth grade year and continues into the first quarter of his/her ninth grade year. Your child will receive a Pre-Transition Survey during his/her 8th grade English class and will receive a Post-Transition Survey in the fall during his/her 9th grade English class.

The pre- and post- survey that s/he will take is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers.

Your child will not be asked to write his/her name on the survey, but will be asked for his/her student identification number. This number will not be used to identify your child, personally, but will be used to match answers on the pre-survey to the answers provided on the post-survey that s/he will take once s/he becomes a ninth grader.

Your child will be asked several questions regarding his/her academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the school s/he is currently attending. S/he will also be asked questions regarding his/her academic, social, and organizational perceptions of the high school s/he is anticipating to attend. When your child receives the surveys s/he will notice that there are different types of questions. Sometimes s/he will be asked to write an answer in your own words. Sometimes s/he will be asked how strongly s/he disagrees or agrees with a statement. Sometimes s/he will be asked about how often s/he sees or does certain things. Sometimes s/he will be asked to choose among several options, or to tell a little about him/herself. Your child will be encouraged to answer each question to the best of his/her ability, trying not leave any answers blank, and to choose the answer that best matches how s/he feels.

If you decide to permit your child to be in this research study, you will be asked to sign this form. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered, and understand what will happen to your child.

Significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to your willingness to continue participation will be provided to you.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no known risks associated with this research. As a result of participation in

this research, it is possible that your child may obtain a greater awareness of the transition experience and, therefore be able to look for additional support to ease the transition process.

BENEFITS TO YOU AND OTHERS

Your child may not get any direct benefit from this study, but, the information we learn from participants in this study may help us better understand what type of academic, social, and organizational support is needed in order to maximize the potential of high achieving students when they transition into high school.

COSTS

There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time your child will spend filling out the questionnaires.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Any information obtained during this study that could identify your child will be kept

strictly confidential. The student is asked to provide his/her student identification number for pre- and post-transition survey matching only. The identification number cannot in any way be traced by the researcher back to the individual student.

Your child's survey answers will be identified using his/her student identification number and birth date, not his/her name, and it will be stored in a locked research area. All identifying information, such as the student identification number, will be kept in password protected files and these files will be deleted within a year of analysis completion. Other records, specifically the completed pre- and post-transition surveys, will be kept in a locked file cabinet for one year after the study ends and will be destroyed at that time. None of these files will be kept indefinitely. Access to all data will be limited to study personnel.

We will not tell anyone the answers your child gives us; however, information from the study and the consent form signed by you may be looked at or copied for research or legal purposes by the Virginia Commonwealth University.

The information obtained in this study will be published in a dissertation, and may be published in educational journals or presented at educational meetings, but your child's identity will be kept strictly confidential.

We will not tell anyone the answers your child gives us. But, if your child tells us that someone is hurting her or him, or that she might hurt herself or someone else, the law says that we have to let people in authority know so they can protect your child.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your child does not have to participate in this study. If you permit your child to participate, s/he may stop at any time without any penalty. Your child may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study. You are free to decide not to enroll your child in this study or to withdraw your child at any time without adversely affecting their or your relationship with the investigator, teacher, Chesterfield County Public Schools, or Virginia Commonwealth University. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled.

Your child's participation in this study may be stopped at any time by the study staff without your consent. The reasons might include:

- the study staff thinks it necessary for your child's health or safety;
- your child has not followed study instructions;
- the researcher has stopped the study; or
- administrative reasons require your child's withdrawal.

If your child leaves the study before the final, post-transition survey is administered in the fall of 2010, there will be no adverse consequences to your child.

QUESTIONS

In the future, you may have questions about your child's participation in this study. If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, contact:

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR	SECONDARY INVESTIGATOR
Randi Smith: (804) 594-1761	Dr. Charol Shakeshaft: (804) 828-1940

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a participant in this study, you may contact:

Office for Research
Virginia Commonwealth University
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 113
P.O. Box 980568

Richmond, VA 23298
Telephone: 804-827-2157

You may also contact this number for general questions, concerns or complaints about the research. Please call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to talk to someone else. Additional information about participation in research studies can be found at http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/volunteers.htm.

CONSENT
I have been given the chance to read this permission form. I understand the information about this study. Questions that I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to allow my child to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of the consent form once I have agreed to participate.

_____

Name of Child

_____

Participant name printed ***Participant signature*** ***Date***

_____

Name of Parent or Legal Guardian (Printed)

_____ _____

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature Date

_____

Name of Witness to Parent Signature [1] (Printed)

_____ _____

Signature of Witness to Parent Signature [1] Date

_____ _____

Principal Investigator Signature (if different from above) Date [2]

[1] *[A witness to the signature of a research participant is required by VA Code. If the witness is to be someone other than the person conducting the informed consent discussion, include a line for the witness to print his/her name and lines for signature and date.]*

[2] *[The purpose of this signature is to ensure that the principal investigator is aware of who has been enrolled in studies. The principal investigator's signature date need not correspond to that of subject or witness, but should be provided after both the subject and witness have signed.*

Appendix C

Youth Assent Form

TITLE: GIFTED STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

VCU IRB NO.: HM12947

What is this study about?

We would like to invite you to take part in this study. We are asking you because you are a honors level or gifted student enrolled in Chesterfield County Public Schools, and will be transitioning into a high school academic program following your 8th grade school year.

In this study, we will try to learn more about how high achieving students' perceive the transition process from middle to high school and to learn whether their perception of the chosen high school program is able to meet their individual needs.

This study is being conducted as part of the requirements for a Virginia Commonwealth University doctoral degree. It is *not* a Chesterfield County Public Schools study.

What will happen to me if I choose to be in this study?

This study will take place during the middle-to-high school transition period, which occurs at the end of your eighth grade year and continues into the first quarter of your ninth grade year. You will receive a Pre-Transition Survey during your 8th grade English class and will receive a Post-Transition Survey in the fall during your 9th grade English class.

The pre- and post- survey that you will take is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers.

You will not be asked to write your name on the survey, but you will be asked for your student identification number. This number will not be used to identify you, personally, but will be used to match your answers on this survey to another survey that you will take once you become a ninth grader.

When you receive the surveys you will notice that there are different types of questions. Sometimes you are asked to write an answer in your own words. Sometimes you are asked how

strongly you disagree or agree with a statement. Sometimes you are asked about how often you see or do certain things. Sometimes you are asked to choose among several options, or to tell a little about yourself. Answer each question to the best of your ability. You will be encouraged to do your best to not leave any answers blank, and to choose the answer that best matches how you feel.

If you decide to be in this research study, you will be asked to sign this form. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered, and understand what will happen to you.

What might happen if I am in this study?

There is no risk to you in this study. You may even learn more about the transition experience and, therefore be able to look for additional support to ease your transition process. The information obtained from this study may also help the district and other educators better understand what type of academic, social, and organizational support is needed in order to help future, high achieving students when they transition into high school.

Will you tell anyone what I say?
We will not tell anyone the answers you give us. We will not share your answers with your teachers or parents or friends. However, other members of your group will know what you say. If you tell us that someone is hurting you, or that you might hurt yourself or someone else, the law requires us to let people in authority know so they can help you.

If we talk about this study in speeches or in writing, we will never use your name.

Do I have to be in this study?
You do not have to be in this study. If you choose to be in the study you may stop at any time. No one will blame you or criticize if you drop out of the study. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw from the study at any time without anything bad happening to you if you choose not to take the survey. Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with your teacher, principal, Chesterfield County Public Schools, or your grade in the class.. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions
If you have questions about being in this study, you can talk to the following persons or you can have your parent or another adult call:

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR SECONDARY INVESTIGATOR

Randi Smith: (804) 594-1761 Dr. Charol Shakeshaft: (804) 828-1940

Do not sign this form if you have any questions. Be sure someone answers your questions.

Assent:
I have read this form. I understand the information about this study. I am willing to be in this study.

_____ _____

Youth name printed ***Youth signature*** ***Date***

_____

Printed Name of Person Conducting Informed

Assent Discussion/Witness (8TH Grade English Teacher)

_____ _____

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Assent Date

Discussion / Witness * (8TH Grade English Teacher)

_____

Principal Investigator Signature (if different from above) ***Date*** ****

Appendix D

Directions for teachers administering Transition Perceptions survey to students

Directions for teachers administering Transition Perceptions survey to students

Teachers: Thank you for helping us to better understand the transition perceptions of high-achieving 8th grade students as they move from middle school into high school. The students' input is very important. Consistent administration of these surveys will assure that the information they provide is usable in our research. If different classes approach the survey in different ways, we will have results that are not comparable.

Please follow these steps when administering the surveys to your students.

1. Please administer the survey *during* your 8th grade Honors English class (rather than sending it home).

2. Please assure that students are not talking to one another or sharing answers.

3. Please allow a maximum of 30 minutes for completion of the survey.

4. Please place all the completed permission forms AND student surveys in the provided envelope (Return the envelope to Randi Smith at the IDC via the CCPS Pony mail.)

Please read the following statements out loud to your students:

1. Your participation will help people understand how you feel about moving from middle school to high school.

2. Participating in this survey is completely voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw from the study at any time without anything bad happening to you if you choose not to take the survey. Your decision not to participate will not affect your relationship with your teacher or principal or your grade in the class.

3. This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. ***Do not*** write your name.

3. Your student identification number will not be used to identify you, personally, but will be used to match your answers on this survey to another survey that you will take once you become a ninth grader.

4. Please notice that there are different types of questions. Sometimes you are asked to write an answer in your own words. Sometimes you are asked how strongly you disagree or agree with a statement. Sometimes you are asked about how often you see or do certain things. Sometimes you are asked to choose among several options, or to tell a little about yourself. Answer each question to the best of your ability.

5. Do your best to not leave any answers blank. Choose the answer that best matches how you feel.

6. You will be asked to complete a follow up to this survey in the fall of your ninth grade year.

7. Your ideas are valuable. Thank you for participating.

If you have any questions, concerns or feedback about this please feel free to call or email Randi Smith at randi_smith@ccpsnet.net or 594-1761

Thanks again for taking the time to assist with this research!

Appendix E

Information for Survey Collector

Information for Survey Collector

Thank you for agreeing to collect the surveys from your students. While you will not be engaged in any formal interviews or participate in the actual data analysis, you do play an important role in the data collection process.

You have been provided with three pre-addressed/labeled manila envelopes. One envelope is for the assent and consent forms. The second envelope is for the actual survey. Finally, the large envelope is for you to place the two smaller envelopes and return them to the IDC/Randi Smith via the inter-office district mailing service (pony).

When students submit their signed assent and consent forms please place them in the appropriately labeled manila envelope. Double check to ensure that both the assent and the consent forms have been signed by students (assent) and parents (consent) before you put them in the envelope.

As your students complete and turn in their surveys, place their survey directly in the pre-addressed manila envelope. Do not look at the materials. Once all surveys have been collected, seal the survey envelope and put this envelope in the large, pre-addressed manila envelope.

Drop the large envelope into the inter-office mail pouch.

Thank you again for your assistance.

Appendix F

Pre-Transition Survey

Pre-Transition Student Survey

1. Personal and Demographic Information

This survey asks questions about your feelings as you prepare to move into 9th grade. The information will help teachers, administrators and others improve conditions to your learning, development and preparation for 9th grade. Please take your time and respond to each question thoughtfully. Your responses will be used in a study examining students' feelings about their transition from 8th to 9th grade. Thanks you for your participation.

*** 1. How old are you today?**

- ◯ 11
- ◯ 12
- ◯ 13
- ◯ 14
- ◯ 15 or older

*** 2. What is your student identification number?**

*** 3. In what month were you born?**

- ◯ January
- ◯ February
- ◯ March
- ◯ April
- ◯ May
- ◯ June
- ◯ July
- ◯ August
- ◯ September
- ◯ October
- ◯ November
- ◯ December

*** 4. Are you:**

- ◯ male
- ◯ female

5. How many siblings (brothers/sisters) do you have living in your home?

6. Do you live with:

- ◯ both parents
- ◯ mother only/primary
- ◯ father only/primary
- ◯ other guardian

Pre-Transition Student Survey

7. What is your racial or ethnic identification?

- ◯ American Indian or other Native American
- ◯ Black/African American
- ◯ White
- ◯ Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- ◯ Asian American or Pacific Islander
- ◯ Other (please specify)

8. Is English the main language used in your home?

- ◯ yes
- ◯ no

9. Do you have a computer with Internet access at home?

- ◯ yes
- ◯ no

2. Educational History & High School Plans

*1. Which of the following instructional service options are you currently participating (8th grade)?

- ◯ Center-based Gifted Manchester Middle School
- ◯ Center-based Gifted Matoaca Middle School
- ◯ Center-based Gifted Midlothian Middle School
- ◯ Center-based Gifted Robious Middle School
- ◯ School-based Gifted OR Honors (attending home-zoned middle school school for gifted/honors services)

*2. How many years did you receive gifted and/or honors service options at the middle school idenitifed in the previous question?

- ◯ 3 years
- ◯ 2 years
- ◯ 1 year

*3. What have most of your middle school grades been?

- ◯ Mostly As
- ◯ Mixed As and Bs
- ◯ Mostly Bs
- ◯ Mixed Bs and Cs
- ◯ Mostly Cs
- ◯ Mixed Cs and Ds
- ◯ Mostly Ds
- ◯ Below D
- ◯ Do not know

Pre-Transition Student Survey

* 4. Which category represents most of your middle school classes?

- ◯ Honors/On grade-level courses
- ◯ Courses for High School Credit
- ◯ General/Regular
- ◯ Do not know

5. Which high school credit science courses did you take while in middle school? (Mark all that apply)

- ☐ Earth Science
- ☐ Biology
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other (please specify)

6. Which high school credit mathematics courses did you take while in middle school? (Mark all that apply)

- ☐ Algebra 1
- ☐ Algebra 2
- ☐ Geometry
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other (please specify)

7. Which high school credit world language courses did you take while in middle school? How many years of the world language did you complete? (Mark all that apply)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
French	☐	☐	☐
German	☐	☐	☐
Latin	☐	☐	☐
Spanish	☐	☐	☐
None	☐	☐	☐

Other language and years completed (please specify)

Pre-Transition Student Survey

8. Which non-high school credit elective courses did you take while in middle school? (Mark all that apply)

	1 Completed Course Credit	2 Completed Course Credits	3 Completed Course Credits
Foregin languages	☐	☐	☐
Band	☐	☐	☐
Chorus	☐	☐	☐
Orchestra	☐	☐	☐
Technology (Woodshop)	☐	☐	☐
Yearbook	☐	☐	☐
Art	☐	☐	☐
Computer graphics	☐	☐	☐
Photography	☐	☐	☐
Speech/Drama	☐	☐	☐
Computer Applications	☐	☐	☐
Journaling	☐	☐	☐

9. Fill in one circle for each of the items below that best describes how you feel about the following items.

	Graduate High School	Vocational/Trade School	4-year College (Bachelor's Degree)	Beyond 4-year Degree (Master's or Doctorate)
How far in school do you think your parent/guardian wants you to go?	○	○	○	○
How far in school do you want to go?	○	○	○	○
What is your parents'/guardian's highest level of education?	○	○	○	○

Pre-Transition Student Survey

10. Which of the following high school programs have you decided to attend in the fall?

- ◯ Home/Neighborhood high school
- ◯ Appomatox Regional Governor's School
- ◯ Maggie Walker Regional Governor's School
- ◯ Specialty Center for the Arts(Thomas Dale HS)
- ◯ Specialty Center for Learning & Teaching Technology (Matoaca HS)
- ◯ Specialty Center for Mass Communications (Manchester HS)
- ◯ Specialty Center for Spanish Immersion (Manchester HS)
- ◯ Specialty Center for Mathematics and Science (Clover Hill HS)
- ◯ Specialty Center for Humanities (Monacan High School)
- ◯ International Baccalaureate Program (Midlothian HS)
- ◯ International Baccalaureate Program (Meadowbrook HS)
- ◯ Governor's Academy for Engineering Studies (L.C. Bird HS)
- ◯ Specialty Center for Leadership and International Studies (James River High School)
- ◯ Specialty Center for Health Sciences (Cosby HS)
- ◯ Private School (not part of the current public school system)
- ◯ Home-schooled

Briefly explain WHY you selected the high school program identified above (i.e., transportation, close to home, friends attending, parental encouragement, personal interest, etc.)

* **11. To what extent did you research and obtain information regarding the academic program of the high school you wish to attend?**

- ◯ Not At All
- ◯ Minimally
- ◯ Moderately
- ◯ Extensively

12. In what forms did you receive information regarding the high school program you plan attend?

- ☐ Informational presentation during the regular school day
- ☐ Brochure promoting the school and/or specialty center
- ☐ Website for high school/specialty center/Governor's School
- ☐ Word of mouth from students/peers who are attending the program
- ☐ Individual conference with guidance counselor
- ☐ Visitation of high school/specialty center/Governor's School during personal/after-school hours
- ☐ Attendance of school for sports or club event
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Pre-Transition Student Survey

13. Does your chosen high school program offer a summer program for incoming ninth graders?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Do not know

14. If offered, do you plan to attend your high school's summer program for incoming ninth graders?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Was not offered

15. Does your chosen high school program offer a fall transition program for first-year ninth graders?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Do not know

16. If offered, do you plan to participate in your high school program's fall transition program for first-year ninth graders?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Was not offered

17. Which of the following activities have you been involved in during 8th grade? (Mark all that apply)

- ☐ School sports team or cheerleading
- ☐ School play or drama group
- ☐ School choir
- ☐ Class council/Student Government
- ☐ Other school club/activity. Please specify _____
- ☐ School newspaper or yearbook
- ☐ School band/orchestra
- ☐ Activity/Club not sponsored by the school.
- ☐ None

Pre-Transition Student Survey

18. In which of the following activities are you interested in becoming involved in during your 9th grade year? (Mark all that apply)

- ☐ School sports team or cheerleading
- ☐ School play or drama group
- ☐ School choir
- ☐ Class council/Student Government
- ☐ Other school club/activity. Please specify:
- ☐ Activities/clubs not sponsored by the school
- ☐ School newspaper or yearbook
- ☐ School band/orchestra
- ☐ None

3. Transition Perceptions

Pre-Transition Student Survey

1. When you think about going to 9th grade, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I look forward to being in a larger school.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to having the freedom to choose an academic plan.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to being around more students.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to being able to choose some of my classes.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to being around older students.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to making new friends.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to taking classes in new subjects.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to having new teachers.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to taking classes that will provide me with challenging academic opportunities.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to a high school program that will address my individual learning needs as a gifted student.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to a high school academic program that will provide me with multiple learning opportunities to engage me as a gifted learner.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to instruction that is delivered in various ways that meet my needs as a gifted learner.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to participating in extra curricular activities (e.g. sports, clubs, student government, band, etc.)	○	○	○	○
I look forward to getting good grades.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to being in a school with new students.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to having more choices for lunch.	○	○	○	○
I look forward to attending school events (e.g. sports, games, dances, concerts, plays, etc.)	○	○	○	○

Pre-Transition Student Survey

2. When you think about going to 9th grade, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I worry about finding my way around.	○	○	○	○
I worry about getting along with other students.	○	○	○	○
I worry that my parents will put too much pressure on me to do well in my classes.	○	○	○	○
I worry that my peers will put too much pressure on me to do well in my classes.	○	○	○	○
I worry about being bullied.	○	○	○	○
I worry about fitting in.	○	○	○	○
I worry about having difficult teachers.	○	○	○	○
I worry about my safety.	○	○	○	○
I worry about new rules.	○	○	○	○
I worry about having too much homework.	○	○	○	○
I worry about feeling peer pressure to do things I don't want to do.	○	○	○	○
I worry about being accepted by other students.	○	○	○	○
I worry about getting lost.	○	○	○	○
I worry that my teachers will put too much pressure on me to do well.	○	○	○	○
I worry about having difficult lessons.	○	○	○	○

Pre-Transition Student Survey

3. When you think about your feelings about school in general, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students are treated fairly at my school.	○	○	○	○
Students at my school are friendly.	○	○	○	○
Excellent work is expected of me.	○	○	○	○
Students are treated fairly by the principal.	○	○	○	○
I behave well in school.	○	○	○	○
Students at my school treat me with respect.	○	○	○	○
I feel safe at my school.	○	○	○	○
Students in my school follow rules.	○	○	○	○
My school building is clean.	○	○	○	○
There are too many students in the classroom.	○	○	○	○
My teachers require that I work hard for the grades I get.	○	○	○	○
My school has enough books and equipment to help me.	○	○	○	○
Bathrooms in my school are clean.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school make learning fun.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school are friendly.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school make me want to learn.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school know a lot about the subject they teach.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school give me homework that helps me learn.	○	○	○	○
My teachers let me know how I am doing in school.	○	○	○	○
Violence is a problem at my school.	○	○	○	○
The principal does a good job.	○	○	○	○
Adults at the school care for me as a person.	○	○	○	○
I like coming to my school.	○	○	○	○
I am getting a good education at my school.	○	○	○	○
	○	○	○	○

Pre-Transition Student Survey

The overall feeling at my school is positive.	○	○	○	○
Students are treated fairly by teachers at my school.	○	○	○	○

4. When you think about your current feelings in 8th grade, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students are treated fairly at my school.	○	○	○	○
Students at my school are friendly.	○	○	○	○
Excellent work is expected of me.	○	○	○	○
Students are treated fairly by the principal.	○	○	○	○
I behave well in school.	○	○	○	○
Students at my school treat me with respect.	○	○	○	○
I feel safe at my school.	○	○	○	○
Students in my school follow rules.	○	○	○	○
My school building is clean.	○	○	○	○
There are too many students in the classroom.	○	○	○	○
My teachers require that I work hard for the grades I get.	○	○	○	○
My school has enough books and equipment to help me.	○	○	○	○
Bathrooms in my school are clean.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school make learning fun.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school are friendly.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school make me want to learn.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school know a lot about the subject they teach.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school give me homework that helps me learn.	○	○	○	○
My teachers let me know how I am doing in school.	○	○	○	○
Violence is a problem at my school.	○	○	○	○
The principal does a good job.	○	○	○	○
Adults at the school care for me as a person.	○	○	○	○
	○	○	○	○

Pre-Transition Student Survey

I like coming to my school.	○	○	○	○
I am getting a good education at my school.	○	○	○	○
The overall feeling at my school is positive.	○	○	○	○
Students are treated fairly by teachers at my school.	○	○	○	○

5. How helpful has each of the following people been in preparing you to move from 8th to 9th grade:

	Not Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful
High school counselors.	○	○	○	○
8th-grade counselors.	○	○	○	○
Parents.	○	○	○	○
Other family members.	○	○	○	○
Students in 8th grade.	○	○	○	○
Students in 9th - 12th grade.	○	○	○	○
9th-grade teachers.	○	○	○	○
8th-grade teachers.	○	○	○	○
Other adults in the school (e.g. administrators, coaches, librarians, etc.)	○	○	○	○

Pre-Transition Student Survey

6. Fill in the circle that best describes how you feel about the following questions:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
How often do your parents/guardians check on whether or not you have done your homework?	○	○	○	○
How much have you talked to your parents/guardians about planning your high school program?	○	○	○	○
How often have you talked to your parents/guardians about your grades in school?	○	○	○	○
How often have you talked to your parents/guardians about your friends in school?	○	○	○	○
How often do your parents/guardians go to your school for meetings, activities, parent conferences, etc.?	○	○	○	○
How often does your guidance counselor check on whether or not you have done your homework?	○	○	○	○
How much have you talked to your guidance counselor about planning your high school program?	○	○	○	○
How often have you talked to your guidance counselor about your grades in school?	○	○	○	○
how often have you talked to your guidance counselor about your friends in school?	○	○	○	○
How often do your peers check on whether or not you have done your homework?	○	○	○	○
How much have you talked to your peers about planning your high school program?	○	○	○	○
How often have you talked to your peers about your grades in school?	○	○	○	○
How often have you talked to your peers about your friends in school?	○	○	○	○
How often do your peers go to your school for meetings,	○	○	○	○

Appendix G Parent/Student

Notification of Post-Transition Letter

November 1, 2010

Dear Parent of CCPS Gifted/Honors' 9th Grader,

At the end of your child's 8th grade school year s/he completed a pre-transition survey that initiated a study of high-achieving 8th graders' perceptions of the academic, organizational, and social perceptions of gifted middle school students before they transitioned into high school. As explained in the pre-transition survey documents, a post-transition survey would be completed at the end of his/her first quarter of the 9th grade year. Therefore, your child is being invited to complete his/her participation in this research project to study the academic, organizational, and social perceptions of gifted middle school students before and after they transition into high school. This study is being conducted as part of the requirements for a Virginia Commonwealth University doctoral degree and is not part of Chesterfield County Public Schools.

Your child is eligible to participate in this study because your child is an honors level or gifted student enrolled in Chesterfield County Public Schools, s/he transitioned into a high school academic program following his/her 8th grade school year, and s/he completed the pre-transition survey at the end of his/her 8th grade year.

The purpose of this study is to investigate high achieving students' perceptions of the transition process from middle to high school and to examine whether their perception of the chosen high school program's ability meets their individual needs.

The final phase of this study will consist of your child completing the Post-Transition survey either in the enclosed paper/pencil format or using the online version, which can be found at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/9thGradePostTransition. If your child chooses to complete the paper/pencil version of this survey a pre-addressed and stamped envelope has been enclosed for your mailing convenience. As stated in the consent form, all survey responses are confidential and it will not be possible to identify individual students from the results.

To my knowledge there are minimal risks associated with this research. While your child may not benefit directly from participation, it is possible that they may obtain a greater awareness of the transition experience and therefore be able to look for additional support to ease the transition process for high-achieving students.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child completing the survey or about his/her participating in this study, you may contact me at **594-1761**. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Commonwealth University has approved this study. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a participant in this study, you may contact:

Office for Research
Virginia Commonwealth University
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 113
P.O. Box 980568
Richmond, VA 23298
Telephone: 804-827-2157

If you are comfortable with your understanding of the study being conducted and with your child completing the second phase of this study please have him/her complete the survey. If your child chooses to complete the paper/pencil version place it in the stamped, pre-addressed envelope to be returned by **November 23, 2010**. If your child chooses to complete the survey online, please have him/her do so by **November 23, 2010**.

Sincerely,

Randi Smith
Student Researcher, VCU

Appendix H

Post-Transition Survey

Post-Transition Survey

1. Post-Transition Survey Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate high achieving students' perceptions of the transition process from middle to high school and to examine whether their perception of the chosen high school program's ability to meet their individual needs.

Post-Transition Survey

2. Demographic Information

*1. How old are you today?

- ◯ 11
- ◯ 12
- ◯ 13
- ◯ 14
- ◯ 15 or older

*2. What is your student identification number?

*3. In what month were you born?

- ◯ January
- ◯ February
- ◯ March
- ◯ April
- ◯ May
- ◯ June
- ◯ July
- ◯ August
- ◯ September
- ◯ October
- ◯ November
- ◯ December

*4. Are you:

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

Post-Transition Survey

5. Do you live with:

- ◯ Both parents
- ◯ mother only/primary
- ◯ father only/primary
- ◯ other guardian

6. How many siblings (brothers/sisters) do you have living in your home?

* 7. What is your racial or ethnic identification?

- ◯ American Indian or other Native American
- ◯ Asian American or Pacific Islander
- ◯ Black/African American
- ◯ Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin
- ◯ White
- ◯ Prefer not to respond
- ◯ Other, specify
- ◯ Other (please specify)

* 8. Is English the main language used in your home?

- ◯ yes
- ◯ no

* 9. Do you have a computer with Internet access at home?

- ◯ yes
- ◯ no

Post-Transition Survey

3. Educational History

*** 10. Which of the following instructional service options did you receive during your middle school years?**

- ◯ Center-based Gifted Manchester Middle School
- ◯ Center-based Gifted Matoaca Middle School
- ◯ Center-based Gifted Midlothian Middle School
- ◯ Center-based Gifted Robious Middle School
- ◯ School-based Gifted (attended home-zoned middle school for honors/gifted services)

*** 11. How many years did you receive gifted service options at the middle school identified in the previous question?**

- ◯ 3 years
- ◯ 2 years
- ◯ 1 year

*** 12. During the first 9-weeks of high school, what have most of your high school grades been?**

- ◯ Mostly As
- ◯ Mixed As and Bs
- ◯ Mostly Bs
- ◯ Mixed Bs and Cs
- ◯ Mostly Cs
- ◯ Mixed Cs and Ds
- ◯ Mostly Ds
- ◯ Below D
- ◯ Do not know

*** 13. Which of the following high school programs are you attending?**

- ◯ Home/Neighborhood high school - Non Specialty Center
- ◯ Appomattox Regional Governor's School
- ◯ Maggie Walker Regional Governor's School
- ◯ Center for the Arts (Thomas Dale High School)
- ◯ Center for Learning & Teaching Through Technology (Matoaca High School)
- ◯ Center for Mass Communications (Manchester High School)
- ◯ Center for Spanish Immersion (Manchester High School)
- ◯ Center for Mathematics & Science (Clover Hill High School)
- ◯ Center for the Humanities (Monacan High School)
- ◯ International Baccalaureate Program (Midlothian High School)
- ◯ International Baccalaureate Program (Meadowbrook High School)
- ◯ Governor's Academy for Engineering Studies (L.C. Bird High School)
- ◯ Center for Leadership & International Studies (James River High School)
- ◯ Center for Health Sciences (Cosby High School)
- ◯ Private School (not part of the current public school system)
- ◯ Home-Schooled (receiving education in personal home by parent or guardian)

Post-Transition Survey

* 14. Briefly explain why you selected the high school program identified in the previous question (i.e., transportation, close to home, friends attending, parental encouragement, personal interest, etc.).

* 15. Which category represents most of your high school/ninth grade classes?

- ◯ Honors/on grade-level courses
- ◯ General/Regular
- ◯ Courses for College Credit
- ◯ Do not know

* 16. Which college credit science courses are you currently taking?

- ◯ AP Environmental Science
- ◯ AP Biology
- ◯ AP Chemistry
- ◯ None, because AP Science courses were not offered to ninth graders in my high school program.
- ◯ None, because I chose not to take AP Science as a ninth grader

* 17. Which college credit mathematics courses are you currently taking?

- ◯ AP Statistics
- ◯ None, because AP Mathematics courses were not offered to ninth graders in my high school program.
- ◯ None, because I chose not to take AP Mathematics as a ninth grader.

* 18. Which college credit history/social studies courses are you currently taking?

- ◯ AP Human Geography
- ◯ None, because AP history/social studies courses were not offered to ninth graders in my high school program.
- ◯ None, because I chose not to take AP history/social studies as a ninth grader.

19. Which college credit electives are you currently taking?

- ◯ AP Journalism
- ◯ AP Psychology
- ◯ AP Music Theory
- ◯ AP Two Dimensional Design: Photography
- ◯ AP Art History
- ◯ AP Studio Art
- ◯ None, because AP elective courses were not offered to ninth graders in my high school program.
- ◯ None, because I chose not to take an AP elective as a ninth grader.

Post-Transition Survey

* 20. Which world language courses are you currently taking? What is the level and the year of the world language course(s) you are currently taking?

	Level	Year of Language (i.e., French 1)
French		
German		
Latin		
Spanish		
Japanese		
Chinese		
Other (specify):		

Other (please specify)

21. Which non-college credit electives are you currently taking?

	Level	Year of Elective Course (i.e., Art 1)
Visual Arts (Art, Photography, etc.)		
Performing Arts (Orchestra, Band, Drama, etc.)		
Technical Education (Keyboarding, woodshop, etc.)		
Writing (Journalism, Yearbook, etc.)		
Other (please specify)		

Other (please specify)

* 22. For each non-college elective course identified above, please provide the specific name of the course. (For example, if you selected Performing Arts please specify if you're taking Band, Orchestra, Drama, etc.)

* 23. How far in school do you think your parent/guardian wants you to go?

- ◯ Graduate from High School
- ◯ Vocational/Trade School
- ◯ 4-year College (Bachelor's Degree)
- ◯ Beyond 4-year Degree (master's or Ph.D.)

Post-Transition Survey

*24. How far in school do you want to go?

- ◯ Graduate from High School
- ◯ Vocational/Trade School
- ◯ 4-year College (Bachelor's Degree)
- ◯ Beyond 4-year Degree (master's or Ph.D.)

*25. What is your parents'/guardians' highest level of education?

- ◯ Graduate from High School
- ◯ Vocational/Trade School
- ◯ 4-year College (Bachelor's Degree)
- ◯ Beyond 4-year Degree (master's or Ph.D.)

*26. Did your chosen high school offer a summer transition program to help prepare you for entering high school?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Was not offered

27. If offered, did you attend your chosen high school's summer transition program?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

*28. Did your high school program offer a fall transition program that helped first-year ninth graders entering high school?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Was not offered

29. If offered, did you participate in your high school program's fall transition program for first-year ninth graders?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Post-Transition Survey

30. Check the following activities and/or clubs that you are involved in OR will pursue when the season begins during 9th grade. (Please check all that apply.)

- ☐ School sports team or cheerleading
- ☐ School play or drama group
- ☐ School choir
- ☐ Class council/Student Government
- ☐ Academic school club (i.e., debate, forensics, Battle of the Brains, etc.)
- ☐ School newspaper or yearbook
- ☐ School band/orchestra
- ☐ activities NOT sponsored by the school (Boy Scouts, Recreational Athletics, etc.)
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Other (please specify)

Post-Transition Survey

4. Perceptions of Educational Experience

31. Thinking about your experiences in 9th grade, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoy being in a larger school.	○	○	○	○
I have the freedom to choose an academic plan.	○	○	○	○
I enjoy being around more students.	○	○	○	○
I enjoy being able to choose some of my classes.	○	○	○	○
I enjoy being around older students.	○	○	○	○
I have made new friends.	○	○	○	○
I enjoy taking classes in new subjects.	○	○	○	○
I enjoy having new teachers.	○	○	○	○
I feel the high school academic program provides challenging academic opportunities for me.	○	○	○	○
I feel the high school academic program addresses my individual learning needs as a gifted student.	○	○	○	○
I feel that the high school academic program provides multiple learning opportunities to engage me as a gifted learner.	○	○	○	○
I feel the instruction in the academic program is delivered in various ways that meet my needs as a gifted learner.	○	○	○	○
I enjoy my new teachers.	○	○	○	○
I participate in extra curricular activities (e.g. sports, clubs, student government, band, etc.).	○	○	○	○
I am getting good grades in 9th grade.	○	○	○	○
I enjoy being in school with new students.	○	○	○	○
I have more choices for lunch.	○	○	○	○
I attend school events (e.g. sports, games, dances,	○	○	○	○

Post-Transition Survey

concerts, plays, etc.)

32. Considering the time when you first arrived in 9th grade, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have trouble finding my way around.	○	○	○	○
I have trouble getting along with other students.	○	○	○	○
My parents put too much pressure on me to do well in my classes.	○	○	○	○
My peers put too much pressure on me to do well in my classes.	○	○	○	○
I have been bullied at my school.	○	○	○	○
I have trouble fitting in.	○	○	○	○
I have difficult teachers.	○	○	○	○
I feel safe at school	○	○	○	○
I understand the new rules at high school.	○	○	○	○
I have too much homework.	○	○	○	○
I feel peer pressure to do things I don't want to do.	○	○	○	○
I feel accepted by other students.	○	○	○	○
I get lost in school	○	○	○	○
My teachers put too much pressure on me to do well.	○	○	○	○
My classes are difficult.	○	○	○	○

Post-Transition Survey

33. When you think about your feelings about school in general, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Being a good student is an important part of who I am.	○	○	○	○
I feel like the things I do at school waste my time more than the things I do outside of school.	○	○	○	○
My grades do not tell me anything about my intelligence.	○	○	○	○
School is satisfying to me because it gives me a sense of accomplishment.	○	○	○	○
If the tests we took were fair, I would be doing much better in school.	○	○	○	○
I am often relived if I just pass a test.	○	○	○	○
I often do my best work in school.	○	○	○	○
I do not care what tests say about my intelligence.	○	○	○	○
School is very boring for me, and I am not learning what I feel is important.	○	○	○	○
I put a great deal of myself into some of the things at school because they have special meaning and interest to me.	○	○	○	○
I feel that the grades I receive are a good reflection of my abilities.	○	○	○	○
I enjoy school because it gives me a chance to learn many interesting things.	○	○	○	○
No test will ever change my opinion of how smart I am.	○	○	○	○

Post-Transition Survey

34. When you think about your current feelings in 9th grade, rate how you feel about the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students are treated fairly at my school	○	○	○	○
Students at my school are friendly.	○	○	○	○
Excellent work is expected of me.	○	○	○	○
Students are treated fairly by the principal.	○	○	○	○
I behave well in school.	○	○	○	○
Students at my school treat me with respect.	○	○	○	○
I feel safe at my school.	○	○	○	○
Students in my school follow rules.	○	○	○	○
My school building is clean.	○	○	○	○
There are too many students in the classroom.	○	○	○	○
My teachers require that I work hard for the grades I get.	○	○	○	○
My school has enough books and equipment to help me.	○	○	○	○
Bathrooms in my school are clean.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school make learning fun.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school are friendly.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school make me want to learn.	○	○	○	○
Teachers at my school know a lot about the subject they teach.	○	○	○	○
teachers at my school give me homework that helps me learn.	○	○	○	○
My teachers let me know how I am doing in school.	○	○	○	○
Violence is a problem at my school.	○	○	○	○
The principal does a good job.	○	○	○	○
Adults at the school care for me as a person.	○	○	○	○
I like coming to my school.	○	○	○	○
I am getting a good education at my school.	○	○	○	○
	○	○	○	○

Post-Transition Survey

The overall feeling at my school is positive.	○	○	○	○
Students are treated fairly by teachers at my school.	○	○	○	○

35. How helpful were these people in preparing you to move from 8th to 9th grade:

	Not Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Helpful	Very Helpful
High school counselors?	○	○	○	○
8th grade counselors?	○	○	○	○
Parents?	○	○	○	○
Other family members?	○	○	○	○
Students in 8th grade?	○	○	○	○
Students in 9th - 12th grades?	○	○	○	○
9th grade teachers?	○	○	○	○
8th grade teachers?	○	○	○	○
Other adults in the school (e.g. administrators, coaches, librarians, etc.)?	○	○	○	○

Post-Transition Survey

36. Fill in one circle that best describes how you feel about the following items:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
How often do your parents/guardians check on whether or not you have done your homework?	○	○	○	○
How much do you talk to your parents/guardians about what yo are learning in high school?	○	○	○	○
How often do you talk to your parents/guardians about your grades in high school?	○	○	○	○
How often do you talk to your parents/guardians about your friends in high school?	○	○	○	○
How often do your parents/guardians go to your school for meetings, activities, parent conferences, etc.)?	○	○	○	○
How often does your guidance counselor check on whether or not you have done your homework?	○	○	○	○
How much have you talked to your guidance counselor about planning your high school program?	○	○	○	○
How often have you talked to your guidance counselor about your grades in school?	○	○	○	○
How often do your peers check on whether or not you have done your homework?	○	○	○	○
How much have you talked to your peers about planning your high school program?	○	○	○	○
How often have you talked to your peers about your grades in school?	○	○	○	○
How often have you talked to your peers about your friends in school?	○	○	○	○
How often do your peers go to your school for meetings, activities, etc.?	○	○	○	○

Appendix I

Post-Transition Reminder Postcard

November 22, 2010

Dear CCPS Student,

LAST CHANCE! If you haven't completed the Post-Transition survey ***please*** take the time to do so and send it back as soon as possible.

You have the option to complete the survey using the mailed, paper/pencil version, or you may choose to complete the survey online at:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/9thGradePostTransition

If you choose the paper/pencil version please be sure to mail it back in the stamped, pre-addressed envelope that was provided with the survey.

All surveys need to be completed and returned by **December 5, 2010**.

Your participation is ***greatly*** appreciated and needed!

Sincerely,

Randi Smith
VCU Doctoral Student
(804)594-1761