

2004

# The Effectiveness of the Freshman Academy at Oscar Smith High School in Chesapeake, Virginia

Maurice Frazier  
*Old Dominion University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots\\_masters\\_projects](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Frazier, Maurice, "The Effectiveness of the Freshman Academy at Oscar Smith High School in Chesapeake, Virginia" (2004). *OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers*. 159.

[https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots\\_masters\\_projects/159](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects/159)

This Master's Project is brought to you for free and open access by the STEM Education & Professional Studies at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

**The Effectiveness of the Freshman  
Academy at Oscar Smith High School in  
Chesapeake, Virginia**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**A Research Project Presented to the  
Graduate Faculty of the Department of  
Occupational and Technical Studies at Old  
Dominion University**

**\*\*\*\*\***

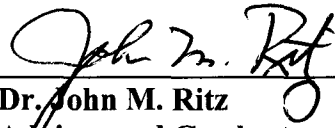
**In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Master of Science  
Degree**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**By  
Maurice Frazier  
July 2004**

# Approval Page

This research paper was prepared by Maurice T. Frazier under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science.

APPROVAL BY:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. John M. Ritz  
Advisor and Graduate  
Program Director

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Table of Contents

	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Research Goals.....	2
Background and Significance.....	2
Limitations.....	4
Assumptions.....	4
Procedures.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	5
Overview of Chapters.....	6
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	7
Transition Programs.....	7
The Freshman Academy.....	12
Summary.....	15
III. METHODS AND PROCEEDURES.....	16
Population.....	16
Instrument Design.....	16

	Methods of Data Collection.....	17
	Statistical Analysis.....	17
	Summary.....	17
IV.	FINDINGS.....	18
	Student Behavior.....	18
	Student Grade Point Averages.....	19
	Attendance.....	20
	Extra Curricular Participation.....	22
	Summary.....	23
V.	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	24
	Summary.....	24
	Conclusions.....	26
	Recommendations.....	27
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	29
	APPENDICES.....	30
	APPENDIX A. Student Grade Point Averages.....	31

# Table of Tables

Table 1.	Summary of Freshman Transition Programs	8
Table 2.	Student Behavior	19
Table 3.	Chi-Square Matrix for the first semester attendance	20
Table 4.	Chi-Square Matrix for the second semester attendance	21
Table 5.	Attendance comparison of Academy and Non-Academy Students	22
Table 6.	Extra Curricular Participation	23

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

The first year of high school for many students is the most difficult adjustment period that they have ever encountered. Often times the school that they are entering is significantly larger than their middle school and can be a lot more intimidating.

Freshmen frequently are challenged by upper classmen. They tend to still be fairly immature and are unfamiliar with the operation of the high school setting. Due in part to these factors, the freshman transition from middle school to high school can be a difficult one. More and more schools are instituting programs in attempts to quell some of the transition problems that are encountered by the average freshman student.

One way that schools are addressing the problems that freshman are having in adjusting to high school is to implement transition programs. These programs are designed to ease the shift from middle school to high school. Some of the goals of transition programs include the promotion of higher attendance, improved behavior, a higher GPA, and increased extra curricular involvement. Freshman students that are in such programs are typically enrolled in a specialized class to help them with issues such as understanding school policy, managing conflict, enhancing study skills, and understanding the importance of their involvement in school activities. Students in the program are also enrolled in some of the same classes in order to help them to get to know some of their fellow classmates and establish a positive rapport with staff members.

Currently it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of freshman transition programs. For some schools, the program has not been in existence very long and there are no real data to analyze whether the program is providing the desired outcome. It is a

shared sentiment by administrators and teachers alike that many freshmen need significant help and guidance in order to get their high school experience headed in the proper direction. By implementing freshman transition programs students are given the tools and support that are necessary for them to be successful in high school.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Freshman Academy at Oscar Smith High School in Chesapeake, Virginia.

### **Research Goals**

The goals of this study were to answer the following questions:

1. Does the completion of the Freshman Academy contribute to the reduction of negative behavior incidents by students?
2. Does the completion of the Freshman Academy contribute to a higher overall class GPA?
3. Does the completion of the Freshman Academy contribute to an increase in overall school attendance?
4. Does the completion of the Freshman Academy contribute to an increase in the student's involvement in extra curricular activities?

### **Background and Significance**

The idea for a freshman transition program from middle school to high school arose when it was found that freshman were having trouble adjusting academically and socially in the high school setting. It has been observed by the administration at Oscar Smith High School that many freshmen lack study skills, are less likely to be involved in



school activities, and have difficulty to integrating into a larger school setting. Dr. Janet Andrejco, the school Principal, submitted a proposal to school system administration to establish a program to alleviate some of these problems. As a result of the proposal, the transition program, called the “Freshman Transition Academy”, was put into action. Although the program has been implemented, there is currently no specific data to judge the effectiveness of the program.

A similar program has been put into place at Smokey Mountain High School, in Sylva, North Carolina. This transition program was called the Freshman Framework. Since implementation there have been tremendous gains. Algebra I scores increased by 5.1 percent, Civics scores showed a 2.7 percent gain and English I scores were up 10.1 percent (Hotaling, 2003). Reviewing the data that were gathered from this program, Mary Ann Barker, the Principal at Smokey Mountain High, felt that it was a step in the right direction. Hopefully the Freshman Academy at Oscar Smith High can have similar results.

It has been found that as many as 5% of all high school students leave school each year; and among certain student populations (e.g., rural or urban) more than 10% drop out annually (Bureau of the Census (DOC), 1997). The Freshman Transition Academy was adopted to lessen the number of students that were turned into the office for behavior problems. Another reason for instituting the transition program was to raise GPA's of all of the students that were a part of the program. Students were expected to become involved in more extra curricular activities and lower their number of absences from school. It was the hope of the administration that the transition program will solve some of these problems that lead to students failing and dropping out of school.

This study sought to determine the effectiveness of the transition program and provide data that measures its effectiveness. The principal at Oscar Smith High School hopes that the data provide an indication that the program is working. If this could be proven, then there may be some opportunity to obtain city or state funds to expand the program to assist more students and other schools in the system.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study were as follows:

1. The data collected were limited to the students at Oscar Smith High School that were currently enrolled in the Freshman Academy Program.
2. The data collected were limited to sampling of freshman at Oscar Smith High School that are not currently a part of the Freshman Academy in order to develop a comparison.
3. The data collected were limited to the areas of GPA, behavior, attendance, and participation in extra curricular activities.

### **Assumptions**

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. The Freshman Academy was implemented as a tool to ease the adjustment of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students into the high school setting.
2. The teachers and administrators see this program as something positive and beneficial for all students that are involved.
3. The school administrators see a need to expand the program in order to aid more students.

## Procedures

To determine the effectiveness of the Freshman Academy, it was necessary to analyze statistical data on the students whom were enrolled in the program. The data collected were limited to the areas of GPA, behavior/conduct, attendance, and extra curricular participation. Once all of the data were collected and analyzed, they were compared to a sample of freshmen that were involved in the Freshman Academy. The findings will be reported to the administration of Oscar Smith High School. These findings will reflect an assessment of the Freshman Academy program.

## Definitions of Terms

The following definitions were provided to assist the reader in understanding the terms related to this study:

- Oscar Smith High (OSHS):** One of Chesapeake Public School's high schools located in Chesapeake, Virginia.
- Freshman Transition Academy:** A program established by Oscar Smith High School to help 9<sup>th</sup> grade students adjust to high school.
- Grade Point Average (GPA):** The average of a student's grades that they have received from each class they have completed while in high school.
- 4X4 Block Scheduling:** For each 90 day semester students enroll in four classes that last for approximately 90 minutes each, allowing for eight classes per year.

<b>Extra Curricular:</b>	Activities that the student may participate in that are school related. Activities may include sports, clubs, or honor societies.
<b>Character &amp; Tiger Spirit (CATS):</b>	A class that all students in the Freshman Transition Program take to learn about self-esteem, organizational skills, study skills, and character.
<b>Core Team:</b>	A group of teachers that serve as mentors as well as instructors to the students in the Freshman Transition Academy.

### **Overview of Chapters**

This chapter discussed the basics of a freshman transition programs. It stressed the need for such program to help freshman to adjust to the high school setting. The specific focus of the study was expressed in the problem statement. The research goals explained the exact areas to be analyzed in the study. A review was given to acquaint the reader to the origination of the freshman transition program. The definition of terms list was provided to aid in the reader's understanding of the study.

The Review of Literature in Chapter II will discuss the details of freshman transition programs and the studies conducted by other researchers. The Methods and Procedures in Chapter III will explain the means by which the data were collected for the study. The findings in Chapter IV will explain the results of the data collected. The Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations in Chapter V will summarize and draw conclusions for the study.

# CHAPTER II

## Review of Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature related to the goals of the research study regarding the objectives of a freshman transition program and freshman academics. First, a review of literature was undertaken to analyze the structure of a freshman transition program. Aspects such as student selection, the makeup of a typical program, and teacher roles were reviewed. Next, a review of literature was recorded to analyze the specifics of freshman academics. The issues of behavior, academics, attendance, and extracurricular participation were all reviewed as they relate to freshman academics.

## Transition Programs

More and more school systems are making freshman transition programs a part of their high school curriculum. This is due to the large number of freshmen that have difficulties with adjusting to the high school setting. Although these programs are becoming more and more prevalent, they can come in many different forms in order to suit a particular school's needs. One of the features that may vary from one program to another is the method by which the school incorporates the transition program into their existing schedule. The manner in which students are chosen for the program can be different from one school to another as well. Some other features may be the overall structure of the program and the relationship of teachers to the students whom are involved with the program.

One of the problems that face schools that want to incorporate a freshman transition program into their school system is the matter of logistics. Some schools are

still on a traditional six or seven period a day schedule. Some have converted to the newer 4X4 block schedule or some variation of a block schedule. Even though the ideologies of freshman transition programs are generally the same, getting it to fit and become a part of the school structure can be a difficult task. Table 1 will show how some schools in Virginia are fitting their freshman transition program into their high school's curriculum.

**Table 1. A Summary of the Overall Structure of Freshman Transition Programs**

<b>School Division/School Name</b>	<b>School Schedule Type</b>	<b>Portion of School Day in Program</b>	<b>Portion of School Year in Program</b>	<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Staff Development</b>
<b>Albermarle County</b> Western Albermarle HS	6 Period Day	25 Minutes 4 days per week	First 9 weeks	TOPS	None
<b>Alexandria City</b> Minnie Howard	7 period day	Full day	Full year	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade School	Inservice workshops on teaming concepts
<b>Caroline County</b> Caroline County HS	7 period day	1 advisory period every 3-4 weeks	Full year	Freshman Transition	Orientation for all 9 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers on needs of 9 <sup>th</sup> graders.
<b>Frederick County</b> James Wood HS	Block/period combination	Daily Block	Full year	Link Program	Summer inservice on required paperwork, parental involvement, teaming, and cross curricular connections
<b>Prince William County</b> Woodbridge Senior HS	4X4 Block	Daily Block	Fall Semester	Freshman Orientation	Special staff meetings for all Freshman Orientation teachers scheduled 3 times per year.

(Duke, Bourdeaux, Epps, & Wilcox, 1998)

The population of students that qualify for high school transition programs come from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes of the middle schools that feed into the given high school. The manner in which these students are chosen can vary from school to school. In general there are three methods in which students are chosen for a freshman transition program. The first way is that the high school selects a given number of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students with the focus on getting a fairly represented cross section of the student population. Some of the areas for consideration may include academic performance, attendance, and behavior. The “Link Program” at James Wood High School in Frederick County, Virginia, invites students with average to above average mathematics scores to participate in the program (Duke et al., 1998). The Minnie Howard “9<sup>th</sup> Grade School” in Alexandria, Virginia, enlists students that have low attendance and poor academic performance as their primary candidates for their program (Duke et al., 1998).

The second way that students are selected for a transition program is being labeled an at risk student. Students that may fall into this category may have a record of behavior problems, be in the lowest academic percentile of their class, or have low standardized test scores. The “Block 9” program at Charlottesville High School in Charlottesville, Virginia, only accepts students whom are not currently enrolled in any honors or advanced courses.

The third way that students are selected for a transition program is just by default. Some programs require all of the rising 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to participate in the transition program, regardless of their qualifications or middle school performance.

The overall structure, requirements, and organization of the various transition programs are hardly ever exactly the same from one school to another. One of the main

determining factors in how the program will be organized is the daily schedule of the school. Some schools are set up on a 4X4 block schedule and others are set to more traditional six or seven period schedules. Those schools that are set up on a 4X4 block schedule tend to require the students that are a part of the transition program to take a support class of some kind in one of the two first semesters. Woodbridge Senior High School in Prince William County, Virginia, is on a 4X4 schedule and uses one block to provide the freshman support class (Duke et al., 1998). Schools that are set up on a six or seven period day tend to find other times to incorporate the program into the participating student's schedule. Caroline County High School in Caroline County Virginia, is on a seven period schedule and uses one advisory period every three to four weeks to meet with the students (Duke et al., 1998).

The roles of the instructors in many of the freshman transition programs are to serve as a mentor, teacher, and advisor to their students. Several teachers have observed that students are lacking many of the basic skills that are necessary to be successful at the high school level. Some of these problems include a lack of academic preparation, indifference toward homework assignments, a lack of appropriate study skills, and a lack of parental involvement and concern (Hertzog & Morgan, 1998). One idea that is being experimented with in some of the transition programs is the idea of high school and middle school faculty collaboration. This collaboration would include teachers from an eighth grade transition team, a ninth grade team, a designated administrator, and a guidance counselor. All of these educators would make up the general transition team (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999). The middle school teachers would be in communication with the high school teachers to see what are some of the best ways to prepare the



students before they get to high school. This program structure would also give the high school teachers the chance to get to know the students early and develop a rapport before they have them as students. The administration at the middle and high school level would be able to administer the program and monitor the success of the program by using this collaboration type program as well.

Teachers that work in freshman transition programs have to play so many roles in the lives of these students; it sometimes becomes necessary to gain support from other sources. Involving the parents and using upper classmen as mentors for the 9<sup>th</sup> graders has proven to be very effective in making some transition programs a success. By urging parents of transition students to attend workshops that train them to deal with the problems that a freshman student may encounter, many school systems hope that this is a step in the right direction towards success. Woodside High School in Woodside, California, makes use of some of their upper classmen through the SOS (students offering support) program (Hertzog & Morgan, 1998). Students are chosen for this program based on teacher recommendations and self-nominations. The potential peer mentors must attend training during the summer, and each of them is assigned to a group of six to eight freshmen at the beginning of school. The mentors must meet with their group at least seven weeks over the course of the semester. Topics are discussed that include cultural acceptance, harassment avoidance, and positive decision-making (Mader, 2003). These types of discussions help freshman deal with the problems that they may be facing.

## **The Freshman Academy**

Freshman Academies are very specific transition programs for rising 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. It has been said that students make the decision to continue or discontinue their high school experience within the first few weeks of the entering year (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999). Because of this kind of thinking, schools are finding it necessary to institute freshman academies into their curriculum. A number of these academies will have very precise goals for the students that are a part of the program. The goals that are set by the administration and the teachers involved with the program are usually geared to solve some problems that may be prevalent in their school. One goal of freshman academies is to improve student behavior and reduce the number of disruptive incidents. Another goal of freshman academies is to improve the overall GPA of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. A third goal of the program is to increase the attendance of students on a daily basis. A fourth goal of the academy is to get freshman to become more involved socially, by participating in extra curricular activities.

Reducing the number of discipline problems in a high school is always one of the major goals of the administration. It seems that freshman contribute a great deal to the number of discipline problems that the administration has to deal with each year. Due to the many social adjustment problems that plague freshmen when they come to high school, one of the main goals for many of the high schools that have an established freshman academy in place is to improve the behavior problems. One way that the freshman academy is addressing the behavior issue is by establishing special disciplinary practices and policies. One method of conflict resolution for freshmen academy students

is to attend peer mediation. The TOPS program at Western Albermarle High School in Albermarle, Virginia, allows students to attend a group session with a panel of their peers to resolve their problems (Duke, Bourdeaux, Epps, & Wilcox, 1998). Another creative way that has been established to deal with behavior problems is having the team of academy teachers to meet together and discuss the reasons as to why the student is misbehaving. The team of teachers then meets with the student to discuss possible improvement alternatives. If this plan of action does not work, then the parents are called in to discuss the behavior of the student. This system is used in the LINK program at James Wood High School in Frederick County, Virginia (Duke et al., 1998). By taking these key steps to improve behavior among freshman students, there has been a noted decline in discipline referrals.

Another major focus of freshmen academies is to improve the overall grades of freshman students. Due to the tremendous adjustment period that freshman encounter, one of the areas that seem to need the most help is grades. The typical freshman is trying so hard to become adjusted to the size of the school, the new population of students, more teachers, and new rules, that it is difficult for them to keep up with their academic stability. It has been found that the average failure rate among high school freshmen is 20%. It has also been shown that if a student fails the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the chance of that student graduating from high school is only 5% (Walker, 1998). Schools that have enlisted a freshman academy into their school are constantly trying to find a system that works to improve freshman performance. One system that some schools are using is called the Ninth Grade House. This system provides freshmen with a separate set of teachers and sometimes a separate part of the school, where they take classes and get to know the

teachers. Another system that is very popular is the Freshman Transition Team system (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999). This system provides a collaboration of middle and high school teachers, a separate administrator, and guidance counselor. All of these people work together to facilitate better academic performance for their freshman class.

Attendance is another area in which freshmen tend to have a lot of problems. Because of the multitude of adjustment troubles that freshmen have with high school, they tend to not want to come to school. By having an established freshman academy in place, schools are finding that the attendance rate of their freshmen is improving. Sevier County High School in Sevierville, Tennessee, has noted a positive increase in the attendance of their freshman. Since the implementation of their freshman academy (FRAC), the freshman attendance rate is at 95% (Wrel, 2002). This statistic is higher than any other high school freshman attendance rate in their city. It seems that statistics like these are what schools are finding as another benefit of having a freshman academy.

Another aspect of the freshman academy that schools are concerned about is the participation of freshman students in extracurricular activities. Since 9<sup>th</sup> grade students are new to the high school and tend not to know a lot of their peers, they are less apt to become a part of any school related sports, clubs, or activities. Many schools would like to see participation increase because it would give freshmen a sense of belonging and being a part of the school. Worthington Kilbourne High School in Worthington, Ohio, has a special approach in which they introduce their freshman to the extracurricular possibilities at their school. Each spring during the month of May, eighth graders from the middle schools are assigned to a junior at the high school. The eighth graders are

guided around the school's commons area to talk to other high school students about the activities, clubs, and rituals that are available at the high school. At the end of the tour all of the students attend a luncheon. This experience immediately gives the eighth graders a sense of belonging and also gives the upper class student as sense of being a "big brother" or "big sister" to the rising 9<sup>th</sup> grader (Lindsay, 1997). Activities such as this are an excellent way to begin the necessary social interaction that freshmen need during their first year in high school.

## **Summary**

Chapter II presented the issue of freshman transition programs and their purposes for implementation. Freshman academies were also discussed and the advantages of having them as a part of a high school's curriculum. Data were provided to indicate a reduction of discipline problems from students that were a part of a freshman academy. It was indicated in this chapter that there is a definite increase in the academic performance of students that are enrolled in a freshman academy. Attendance tends to be higher among freshmen that are enrolled in an academy program. Participation in extracurricular activities and social interaction tends to be easier for students as a result of an established freshman academy. Chapter III will provide a profile of the population of students that were used in the study and the procedures of gathering the research data.

# **CHAPTER III**

## **Methods and Procedures**

The methods and procedures that were used in this study are described in this chapter. This chapter will discuss the population chosen for this study, instrument design, the methods of data collection, and the statistical analysis. This study is descriptive in nature.

### **Population**

The population used for this study consisted of approximately 80 freshman students. The students in the study are all participating in the Freshman Academy program at Oscar Smith High School. The students that were chosen for this program come from Crestwood Middle School, Oscar Smith Middle School, and Greenbrier Middle School in Chesapeake, Virginia. The students were selected by the administration with the intent of having a diverse makeup enrolled in the program. Factors including GPA, attendance, and behavior were all taken into consideration.

### **Instrument Design**

The instrument that was used to analyze the GPA, attendance, and behavior of students in the Freshman Academy, as opposed to students that were not enrolled in the program was a comparison table. A similar table was used to examine student participation in extra curricular activities. One column of the table listed the data that related to students participating in the Freshman Academy program and the other column listed data that related to random freshman whom were not a part of the program.

## **Methods of Data Collection**

The data that were collected to analyze the student's GPA was obtained by looking at their personal files in the school's guidance department. Attendance records were acquired in the attendance office on each student. The behavior records on all students were gathered from the assistant principal's office. The records on student participation in extra curricular activities were attained from the student council coordinator.

## **Statistical Analysis**

The sets of data were collected; Chi-square and t-tests were calculated to determine if there were relationships between the two sets of numbers in each category. The purpose of determining Chi-square was to analyze a possible positive or negative correlation between the attendance, behavior, and extra curricular participation of students that were enrolled in the Freshman Academy as opposed to those students that were not in the program. A t-test was used to analyze the relationship between student GPAs.

## **Summary**

Chapter III outlined the methods and procedures used to complete this study. This chapter consisted of the population, instrument design, method of data collection, and statistical analysis. It allowed the researcher to collect data that will be presented as findings in Chapter IV.

# Chapter IV

## Findings

The problem of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Freshman Academy at Oscar Smith High School in Chesapeake, Virginia. This chapter contains the data that were collected to satisfy four aspects of this study. The data were used to determine if there was a significant difference between the grade point averages, attendance, participation in extra curricular activities, and behavior records of students that were in the Freshman Academy as compared to students that were not.

### Student Behavior

Table 2 shows a summary of student behavior between academy and non-academy students. The table shows that 40 academy and 25 non-academy students acquired at least one violation during the school year. There were 23 academy students and 38 non-academy students that didn't receive any violations during the school year. The Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) for this table was 7.15. There was one degree of freedom. The level of significance at the .05 level was 2.71. The level of significance at the .01 level was 5.41.



**Table 2. Student Behavior**

	<b>Acquired School Violations</b>	<b>No School Violations</b>
<b>Academy Students</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Non-Academy Students</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>38</b>

### **Student Grade Point Averages**

The Grade Point Average ( $\bar{x}$ ) for students in the Freshman Academy was found to be 1.23. The Grade Point Average ( $\bar{x}$ ) for students that are not in the program was found to be 2.21. The sum of the difference squared ( $\sum d1^2$ ) for the Academy students was found to be 40.22. The sum of the difference squared ( $\sum d2^2$ ) for the Non-Academy students was found to be 84.71. The value of t was calculated to be  $-55.68$ . The level of significance at the .05 level was 1.65. The level of significance at the .01 level was 2.35. A table showing all of the individual grade point averages can be found in Appendix A.

## Attendance

Table 3 shows a summary of the attendance for the first semester. School policy mandates that the students can have no more than nine days of absences before they fail for the semester. The table shows that 55 academy students missed between the zero and nine days. There were eight students that missed 10 or more days. There were 57 non-academy students that missed between zero and nine days. There were six non-academy students that missed 10 or more days. The Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) for this table was .321. There was one degree of freedom. The level of significance at the .05 level was 2.71. The level of significance at the .01 level was 5.41.

**Table 3. This is a Chi-Square Matrix for the first semester attendance.**

	<b>0-9 Days</b>	<b>10+ Days</b>
<b>Academy Students</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Non-Academy Students</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>7</b>

Table 4 shows a summary of the attendance for the second semester. The table shows that 50 academy students missed between the zero and nine days. There were 13

students that missed 10 or more days. There were 54 non-academy students that missed between zero and nine days. There were nine non-academy students that missed 10 or more days. The Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) for this table was .881. There was one degree of freedom. The level of significance at the .05 level was 2.71. The level of significance at the .01 level was 5.41.

**Table 4. This is a Chi-Square Matrix for the second semester attendance.**

	<b>0-9 Days</b>	<b>10+ Days</b>
<b>Academy Students</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Non-Academy Students</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>9</b>

Table 5 shows the specific number of days missed and the amount of students that missed that number of days for each semester. The table also shows the percentage of students missing a given number of days as compared to the total number of students in the group. The table compares academy and non-academy students.

**Table 5. This table compares Academy students to Non-academy students for each semester.**

<b># of Days Missed</b>	<b><u>Academy Students</u></b>				<b><u>Non-Academy Students</u></b>			
	<b><u>Semester #1</u></b>		<b><u>Semester #2</u></b>		<b><u>Semester #1</u></b>		<b><u>Semester #2</u></b>	
	<b>number of students</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>number of students</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>number of students</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>number of students</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>0</b>	5	7.9	4	6.3	18	28.5	15	23.8
<b>1</b>	9	14.2	6	9.5	8	12.6	7	11.1
<b>2</b>	10	15.8	9	14.2	9	14.2	5	7.9
<b>3</b>	4	6.3	6	9.5	4	6.3	9	14.2
<b>4</b>	6	9.5	6	9.5	8	12.6	2	3.1
<b>5</b>	7	11.1	4	6.3	0	0	3	4.7
<b>6</b>	0	0	0	0	3	4.7	6	9.5
<b>7</b>	5	7.9	6	9.5	5	7.9	5	7.9
<b>8</b>	5	7.9	6	9.5	1	1.5	2	3.1
<b>9</b>	4	6.3	3	4.7	1	1.5	0	0
<b>10+</b>	8	12.6	13	20.6	6	9.5	9	14.2

### **Extra Curricular Participation**

Table 6 shows a summary of the extra curricular participation between academy and non-academy students. The table shows that 15 academy students and 22 non-

academy students that participated in at least one extra curricular activity during the school year. There were 48 academy students and 41 non-academy students that did not participate in any extra curricular activities. The Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) for this table was 1.874. There was one degree of freedom. The level of significance at the .05 level was 2.71. The level of significance at the .01 level was 5.41.

**Table 6. Extra Curricular Participation**

	<b>Participated</b>	<b>No Participation</b>
<b>Academy Students</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Non-Academy Student</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>41</b>

### **Summary**

Chapter IV provided results to the data collected in the areas of student attendance, extra curricular participation, behavior, and grade point averages. The students that were enrolled in the Freshman Academy were compared to students whom were not in the program. Chi-Square and t-test tables were used to display the data. Chapter V will provide the Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations of the study.

# CHAPTER V

## Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this chapter was to report the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of this study. The information was based on the results of the research data that were obtained from the 2003-2004 school records of freshman academy students. There were a total of 126 students that were included in this study. Half of the students were enrolled in the Freshman Academy program, and that other half was a random sampling of ninth grade students.

### Summary

The problem of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Freshman Academy at Oscar Smith High School in Chesapeake, Virginia. There are several research goals that were used in order to find an answer to this problem. The first research goal was to determine if the completion of the Freshman Academy contributed to the reduction of negative behavior incidents by students. The second goal was to determine if the completion of the Freshman Academy contributed to a higher overall GPA. The third goal was to determine if the completion of the Freshman Academy contributed to an increase in overall school attendance. The fourth goal was to determine if the completion of the Freshman Academy contributed to an increase in the student's involvement in extra curricular activities.

The significance of this study was to determine if the Freshman Academy that has been put into action at Oscar Smith High School was effective. It has been found that freshmen were having trouble adjusting academically and socially in the high school

setting. The administration at Oscar Smith had also noticed that a number of the freshmen lacked study skills, were less likely to be involved in school activities, and had difficulty integrating into a larger school setting. The Freshman Transition Program was put into place to alleviate some of these problems. The purpose of this study was to measure the program's impact on freshman student performance.

There were a given amount of limitations associated with this study. The first limitation was that the data that were collected were limited to the students at Oscar Smith High School that were currently enrolled in the Freshman Academy Program. The second limitation was that the data collected were limited to a sampling of freshman at Oscar Smith High School that were not currently a part of the Freshman Academy in order to develop a comparison. The third limitation was that the data collected were limited to the areas of GPA, behavior, attendance, and participation in extra curricular activities.

The population of this study were freshmen students at Oscar Smith High School in Chesapeake, Virginia. Half of the students were enrolled in the Freshman Transition Academy and the other half were picked at random. There were no instruments that were used in this study. All data were acquired from student records that belong to the school. All data were collected from the administration and the yearbook sponsor. The Chi-square comparison was used to complete the statistical procedures for student's attendance, behavior, and extra curricular participation. A t-test was used to compare the significance of both group's GPA.

## Conclusions

The first research goal stated that the completion of the Freshman Academy contributed to the reduction of negative behavior incidents by students. The findings of this study showed that there were a significantly higher number of school violations acquired by academy students as compared to students that were not in the program. According to the data presented through the Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ), it was calculated to be 7.15. This value the .01 level of significance because  $p > .01 = 5.41$ . The degree of freedom was 1. Therefore, the researcher rejects the statement of the Freshman Academy contributing to a reduction of negative behavior incidents as compared to students whom are not in the program.

The second research goal stated that the completion of the Freshman Academy contributed to a higher student GPA. The findings of this study showed that the mean GPA for academy students was 1.23 and the mean GPA for non-academy students was 2.21. The degree of freedom was 124. The value of t was determined to be 5.48. This value exceeded both the .01 or .05 level of significance because  $p > .05 = 1.65$  and  $p > .01 = 2.35$ . Therefore, the researcher rejects the statement of the Freshman Academy contributing to an overall higher student GPA.

The third research goal stated that completion the Freshman Academy contributes to an increase in overall student attendance. The findings of this study showed that there was no significant difference in the number of days missed by the students in the Freshman Academy and those students that were not in the program. According to the data for the first semester attendance, Chi-Square =  $\chi^2 = .321$ . According to the data for the second semester attendance, Chi-Square =  $\chi^2 = .881$ . Neither of these values



exceeded the .01 or .05 level of significance because  $p > .05 = 2.71$  and  $p > .05 = 5.41$ .

Therefore, the researcher rejects the statement of the Freshman Academy contributing to an increase in overall student attendance.

The fourth research goal stated that the completion of the Freshman Academy contributed to an increase in the student's involvement in extra curricular activities. The findings of this study showed that there was no significant difference in the level of student participation in extra curricular activities between academy students and non-academy students. According to the data presented, the Chi-square  $= \chi^2 = 1.87$ . The degree of freedom was 1. This value does not exceed the .01 or .05 level of significance because  $p > .05 = 2.71$  and  $p > .01 = 5.41$ . Therefore the researcher rejects that statement of the Freshman Academy contributing to an increase in the student's involvement in extra curricular activities.

## **Recommendations**

Based upon the research findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher has included several recommendations. The first recommendation is that the school allow special planning and preparation time for Academy core team teachers. This special planning time would allow for freshman Mathematics, English, Science, and Social Studies teachers to come together to better decide the most effective manner in which to meet the instructional needs of freshman students.

The researcher additionally recommends that the school involve upper classman into the Freshman Transition Academy scheme. These upper class students could act as a form of mentors for the freshman students.

In light of these findings, a suggestion for an additional research study would be to study the impact of parental involvement in freshman achievement and acclimation to the high school setting. Besides teachers, parents can also be influential in the behavior of their children.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Duke, D.L., Bourdeaux, J., Epps, B., Wilcox, T. (1998, May). Ninth Grade Transition Programs in Virginia. A *Policy Perspectives Paper*.
- Hertzog, C. J. & Morgan P. L. (1998, April). Breaking The Barriers Between Middle School and High School: Developing a Transition Team for Student Success. *NASSP Bulletin*, 597, 94-98.
- Hertzog, C. J. & Morgan P. L. (1999, January/February) Making the Transition from Middle Level to High School. *High School Magazine*, 4,26-30.
- Hotaling, L. (2003, August). The Freshman Transition Program 'Shows Promise' Barker Says: The Sylva Herald. From [www.thesylva Herald.com/A-freshman\\_082803.htm](http://www.thesylva Herald.com/A-freshman_082803.htm).
- Lindsay, D. (1997, September). Transition From Middle To High School: Worthington Kilbourne High School Model. *American Secondary Education*, v26. 21-25.
- Mader, M. (2003, March). Sequoia District Program Honored: Almanac News. From [www.almanacnews.com/morgue/2003/2003\\_03\\_26.whsawrd.html](http://www.almanacnews.com/morgue/2003/2003_03_26.whsawrd.html).
- Walker, C. (1998, October). The WHHS Freshman Academy Retrieved 10/26/03. from <http://www.greenville.k12.Sc.us/websites/wade/facademy/index.html>.
- Wrel, N. (2002). Schools Making Progress: Retrieved from. [www.nwrel.org/scpd/sslc/descriptions/sevier/index.asp](http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sslc/descriptions/sevier/index.asp)

**APPENDIX A**  
**Student Grade Point Averages**

### Student Grade Point Averages

	Academy Students		Non-Academy Students	
	GPA	$d^2$	GPA	$d^2$
<b>Student #1</b>	2.25	1.04	.8	1.98
<b>Student #2</b>	.125	1.23	3.0	.62
<b>Student #3</b>	.875	.12	.37	3.38
<b>Student #4</b>	2.25	1.04	2.3	0
<b>Student #5</b>	1.25	0	3.16	.9
<b>Student #6</b>	.82	.16	.62	2.52
<b>Student #7</b>	.87	.36	3.47	1.58
<b>Student #8</b>	2.4	1.36	3.25	1.08
<b>Student #9</b>	2.75	2.31	2.66	.2
<b>Student #10</b>	2.25	1.04	1.15	1.12
<b>Student #11</b>	.875	.12	2.17	.25
<b>Student #12</b>	2.5	1.61	3.6	1.93
<b>Student #13</b>	0	1.51	2.0	.04
<b>Student #14</b>	1.25	0	2.25	0
<b>Student #15</b>	1.62	.15	2.89	.46
<b>Student #16</b>	1.25	0	3.4	1.41
<b>Student #17</b>	.62	.37	2.37	.02
<b>Student #18</b>	0	1.51	2.77	.31
<b>Student #19</b>	1.44	.04	2.33	.01

<b>Student #20</b>	.87	.12	3.65	2.07
<b>Student #21</b>	2.5	1.61	2.5	.08
<b>Student #22</b>	2.0	.59	3.83	2.62
<b>Student #23</b>	1.62	.15	.5	2.92
<b>Student #24</b>	2	.59	.36	3.42
<b>Student #25</b>	.5	.53	1.12	1.18
<b>Student #26</b>	.75	.23	.62	2.52
<b>Student #27</b>	2.25	1.04	1.37	.7
<b>Student #28</b>	1.62	.15	3.2	.98
<b>Student #29</b>	2.0	.59	2.25	0
<b>Student #30</b>	1.25	0	3.12	.82
<b>Student #31</b>	.25	.96	.62	2.52
<b>Student #32</b>	.25	.96	1.37	.7
<b>Student #33</b>	1.12	.01	3.27	1.12
<b>Student #34</b>	2.12	.79	.68	2.34
<b>Student #35</b>	.25	.96	.12	4.36
<b>Student #36</b>	.62	.37	3.57	1.84
<b>Student #37</b>	.37	.73	3.4	1.41
<b>Student #38</b>	2.37	1.29	3.16	.9
<b>Student #39</b>	.62	.37	3.8	2.52
<b>Student #40</b>	1.25	0	3.74	2.34
<b>Student #41</b>	1.62	.15	.5	2.92
<b>Student #42</b>	1.75	.27	1.37	.7

<b>Student #43</b>	1.75	.27	3.22	1.02
<b>Student #44</b>	2.37	1.29	2.5	.08
<b>Student #45</b>	.82	.16	1.65	.31
<b>Student #46</b>	.87	.12	3.29	1.16
<b>Student #47</b>	.37	.73	.81	1.96
<b>Student #48</b>	.37	.73	.56	2.72
<b>Student #49</b>	.25	.96	3.8	2.52
<b>Student #50</b>	.25	.96	1.0	1.46
<b>Student #51</b>	.5	.53	2.25	0
<b>Student #52</b>	1.0	.05	1.87	.16
<b>Student #53</b>	1.5	.07	2.25	0
<b>Student #54</b>	.25	.96	3.32	1.23
<b>Student #55</b>	2.87	2.68	3.22	1.02
<b>Student #56</b>	1.0	.05	2.98	.59
<b>Student #57</b>	.5	.53	1.0	1.46
<b>Student #58</b>	.25	.96	3.62	1.98
<b>Student #59</b>	2.5	1.61	2.72	.26
<b>Student #60</b>	.5	.53	2.62	.16
<b>Student #61</b>	1.25	0	.75	2.13
<b>Student #62</b>	2.0	.59	0	4.88
<b>Student #63</b>	1.37	.0	3.12	.82