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# The Relationship Between the Comprehensiveness of a School System's Eighth to Ninth Grade Transition Process and the Degree of Trust Shared By Middle-School Principals and High-School Principals

Thomas McMorran
*Seton Hall University*

The Relationship Between The Comprehensiveness Of A School System's Eighth To Ninth Grade Transition Process And The Degree Of Trust Shared By Middle-School Principals And High-School Principals

By
Thomas McMorran

Dissertation Committee

Dr. Christopher Tienken, Mentor
Dr. Charles Achilles, Committee Member
Dr. Dianna Lindsay, Committee Member
Dr. Adeline Merrill, Committee Member

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Doctoral Candidate, **Tom McMorran,** has successfully defended and made the required

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## DISSERTATION COMMITTEE
(please sign and date beside your name)

Mentor:
Dr. Christopher Tienken

Committee Member:
Dr. Charles Achilles

Committee Member:
Dr. Dianna Lindsay

Committee Member:
Dr. Adeline Merrill

ABSTRACT

The Relationship between the Comprehensiveness of a School System's Eighth to Ninth

Grade Transition Process and the Degree of Trust Shared by Middle-School Principals

and High-School Principals

The purpose for this study was to determine what is the relationship between the

degree of trust that the principals of middle schools and high schools invest in each other

and the comprehensiveness of their eighth-to-ninth grade transition programs. Data were

gathered through the administration of a three-part survey designed to collect information

about (1) transition practices that directly involve principals, (2) transition practices that

involve members of the school community other than principals, and (3) a principal-to-

principal trust inventory. The anonymous survey was completed by 30 middle-school

principals and 30 high-school principals from 64 school systems in Connecticut. These

school districts shared a structure of having one middle school and one high school.

Analysis of this survey led to the conclusion that there is a basic association between

principal-to-principal trust and the comprehensiveness of transition planning and

implementation; where there is a high degree of trust there is a corresponding greater

comprehensiveness in transition activity. Conversely, where there is a lower degree of

trust, there is also less comprehensive eighth-to-ninth grade transition program.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my first and best teachers, my mother and father, Monica and Philip McMorran, who taught my siblings and me that perseverance and service to others lead one to rewarding accomplishments; I also dedicate this work to my best friend and life-time companion for the last 32 years, my dearest love, Colleen and our two daughters, Katie and Hope.

I would also like to dedicate this to the memory of one of my favorite students, Robert Smuniewski, member of the Joel Barlow High School Class of 2011.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The transition from middle school to high school for eighth-graders who are

becoming freshmen is a stressful time in their education (Kennelly & Monrad, 2009).

Yet, there is a relationship between success in the freshman year and the likelihood that a

student will graduate on time from high school (Horwitz & Snipes, 2008; Reyes, Gillock,

Kobus, & Sanchez, 2000). In some cases eighth-graders leave the comfort of a student-

centered middle school and enter a more complex high school with a larger population of

students, and researchers have determined that they experience a loss of direct connection

to their teachers and administrators as a consequence of the differences in school

structure (Barber & Olsen, 2004). This generates academic, procedural, and social

concerns among these rising freshmen (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Academic concerns have

to do with the expected rigor of class work and increased homework. Procedural

concerns reflect fears about navigating the larger building and complying with more

comprehensive rules and regulations. Social concerns reveal a student's fear that he or

she will not have friends. Because it has been established that school climate contributes

to students' confidence, which in turn promotes student achievement (Hoy, 2010), it is

important to lower the anxieties of rising freshmen.

Research into how parents, teachers, and students perceive the transition process

(Akos & Galassi, 2004) and lists of best practices are available in scholarly and trade

publications that identify the components of effective transition plans (Anderson, 2008;

Cooney & Bottoms, 2008; Fonts, 1998; Hertzog & Morgan, 1997, 1998; Horwitz & Snipes, 2008; Kennelly & Monrad, 2009; Mizelle, 2005; Queen, 2002). However, very little attention has been paid to the nature of the relationship between middle-school principals and high-school principals and their role in the transition process. Where principals are mentioned, it is assumed that they will facilitate and coordinate transitions (Queen, 2002). There is little research into the nature of that principal-to-principal relationship when viewed in terms of the degree of trust shared by middle-school and high-school administrators.

### Statement of the Problem

Although there has been interest in parent, student, and teacher perceptions of the quality of transition programming for rising freshmen, the relationship between middle-school principals and high-school principals and the role they play in the transition has not received enough attention. For example, an examination of 44 dissertation précis published between 1983 and 2009 determined that 19 were programmatic reviews, 15 were about student, staff, and parent perceptions of the transition, five examined the needs of specific student populations, two focused on internal middle-school issues, and three were about the role of leadership in the transition process (Appendix A). Of these three, one was about the transformation of a junior high school into a middle school, and thus not relevant to this project. This leaves only two studies about the role of leadership. How middle-school principals and high-school principals design, oversee, and shepherd the transition is an under-examined aspect of this important process. Cooney and Bottoms (2008) specifically call for middle schools and high schools to mend "the weak link" that separates them.

Prior to Fonts's (1998) research into the role played by middle-and-high-school principals in the transition process, there had not been much interest in this topic, and since that time few have attempted to span the boundary that separates middle-school principals and high-school principals. Fonts recommended further research into the learning styles of these principals and how they communicate. Fonts concluded that principals agree on the importance of transition programs, but their behaviors do not reflect their beliefs (p. 178). This leads one to ponder what factors are prohibiting direct, productive collaboration between middle-school principals and high-school principals.

A supposition of this study is that principals at both levels do not have the time, cultural expectations, or district structures in place that would allow them to develop meaningful relationships: It could be that they do not enjoy a high degree of trust in each other and this potentially contributes to their failing to collaborate on transition planning. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) reported that the actions of principals are second only to teaching in their impact on student performance in terms of factors that can be controlled by the school (p. 3). Further, Anderson (2008) called for school administrators to understand their role as mediators and transformational leaders in order for transitions to be successful (p. 52). The problem cannot be that principals do not know what to do (Fonts, 1998). Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) referred to this as a "knowing-doing gap." Administrators know what to do, but they do not take appropriate action.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to seek correlations between the degree to which leaders trust each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition plans.

Kegan and Lahey (2001) argued that the way we talk can change the way we work with each other. One responsibility of leaders is to collaborate (Heenan & Bennis, 1999), and some have argued that this collaboration must be employed to close gaps between units within an organization, or, said a different way, leaders must be "boundary spanners" (Goldring, Crowson, Laird, & Beck, 2003). Heifitz and Linsky (2002) argued that the single most common cause of leadership failure occurs when leaders treat complex adaptive problems as mere technical problems. They explained the latter as routine issues for which people possess the knowledge and skills necessary to employ procedures that will solve the problem. Adaptive problems, on the other hand, pose complex challenges because, "they require experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places in the organization or community" (p. 13). According to Heifitz and Linsky, organizational dynamics create "strong internal pressures" to approach an adaptive problem as though it were merely a technical one. They advised the development of adaptive skills in leaders so they can maintain relationships: "Leadership takes the capacity to stomach hostility so that you can stay connected to people, lest you disengage from them and exacerbate the danger" (p. 18). Middle-school principals and high-school principals may need to be better connected to each other.

Managers who work in trusting relationships were found to be more efficient problem solvers than those who did not trust each other (Zand, 1972). There is an additional responsibility for managers to create an atmosphere of trust (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaar, & Werner, 1998). The transition process affects student performance in the freshman year, and this in turn influences on-time graduation rates (Horwitz & Snipes,

2008; Kennelly & Monrad, 2009), and transition planning and implementation is a responsibility of school leaders (Akos, Queen, & Lineberry, 2005).

## Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between the degree of trust that middle-school principals and high-school principals invest in each other?

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between the degree of trust that middle-school principals and high-school principals invest in each other.

2. What is the relationship between the degree of trust middle-school principals and high-school principals hold for each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition planning?

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between the degree of trust middle-school principals and high-school principals hold for each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition planning.

## Conceptual Framework

This examination of trust will integrate the research of several research teams. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) definition of trust in schools comports well with Bryk and Schneider's (2002) theory of relational trust. These two fit well with Lewicki and Bunker's (1996) three-stage theory of trust. Trust has behavioral, affective, and cognitive implications for those within a trusting relationship, and for this reason an organizational trust inventory developed by Philip Bromiley and various associates shall be part of the fieldwork's instrumentation (Cummings & Bromiley, 1996; Vidotto, Vincentini, Argentero, & Bromiley, 2008).

## Significance of the Study

The fieldwork of this study should yield data that will allow me to be able to interpret the relationship between the degree of trust shared by principals and the comprehensiveness of their transition plans. In addition to indicating the potential value of improving or deepening collaborative relationships between principals of middle schools and high schools, I should be able to identify a variety of transition activities and indicate which activities would be best for the introduction of a new transition program and which would better serve to extend and enhance current transition programs.

A survey can be an effective means of collecting this data. McMillan, Lawson, Lewis, and Snyder (2002) reported that effect size measures the magnitude, importance, or practicality of a relationship (p. 2). Advocating the position that Cohen's $d$ is the "measure of choice" they observed, "One of the continuing challenges in education research is to draw conclusions from empirical studies that will have clear implications for practice. Effect size measures provide a tool to help researchers determine what is of practical as well as statistical significance" (p. 10). Bryk and Schneider (2002), who researched the role of relational trust in schools, concluded from fieldwork they conducted in 1994 that "surveys could reliably measure relational trust in school communities" (p. 93).

The long-standing structure of contemporary public schools (district, elementary, middle school, and high school) has focused the attention of leadership horizontally at each level, leaving the interstices unexamined. Natural cultural boundaries separating professionals have grown into daunting psychological distances that orient teachers and

administrators on their own students, and absolve them from paying attention to the

vertical advancement of students as they age up through a system. Yet, the passage from

elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school can be

counterproductive to a student's academic achievement (Alspaugh, 1998). Therefore, a

theory of leadership that orients the responsibilities of principals not only horizontally but

also vertically can promote collaboration via distributed leadership (Spillane, Halverson,

& Diamond, 2004). Results from this study should demonstrate the importance of

closing the gaps between schools by allocating time and resources to help middle-school

principals and high-school principals nurture close, trusting, and mutually reinforcing

relationships.

## Limitations

1. The expectation is that principals will respond honestly, yet the very nature of

the problem (that cultural structures prevent these leaders from working together) may

lead to reticence or lack of participation. This places a limitation on the study.

2. Given the nature of the topic, either the halo effect, in which respondents

select the choices that best present themselves, or the John Henry effect, in which

members of two groups respond in a manner that shows "compensatory rivalry" between

the groups, may influence how a principal responds (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p.

249). As these principals frequently compete for limited resources, this may be an active

effect.

3. The correlational design of the study prevents the ability to draw causal

conclusions and results should be interpreted as exploratory.

## Delimitations

1. Responses from middle-school principals and high-school principals who share responsibility for K-8 to high school transitions will not be included because their students would not have previously experienced an elementary school to middle school transition.

2. School systems in which there are more than one middle school or more than one high school will not be included.

3. Private, independent, and religious schools (i.e., not public) will not be included in this study.

4. This study will be delimited to the aggregate responses of middle-school principals and high-school principals.

5. This study will be limited to voluntary participation from middle-school principals and high-school principals in 64 Connecticut school districts with linear structures (elementary school to middle school to high school) and thus results are subject to selection bias. Students in these systems advance from a middle school ending with eighth grade to a high school beginning with ninth grade.

6. One potential delimitation of this study is that a beta version of the survey was not field tested.

7. For the purpose of conducting independent samples t-testing and non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis testing, the sample of 30 middle-school principals and 30 high-school principals will be recoded into various subcategories including the following: (a) Recoding into high-and-low trust groups regardless of school level -- those scoring below 42/84 on the Trust Survey -- will be considered low-trust group, and those scoring

above 42/84 will be considered the high-trust group. (b) Recoding into low-medium-high trust groups regardless of school level (low = < 42/84, medium = 43-76, and high = 77-84).

## Definitions

Attribution Error: The tendency of members of one group inaccurately to attribute moral shortcomings to members of another group based on stereotypes and hostility generated by perceived differences (Hewstone, 1990, p. 331).

Boundary Spanners: A term for principals who serve as "facilitators of change within networks, both offering a point of upload and download of good ideas and practices between the school and the network [of schools], and providing the conditions for boundary spanners to emerge from within the school" (Earl & Katz, 2007).

Cohesive leadership systems: Effective leadership of districts that "…all share comprehensiveness in the scope of their initiatives, alignment of policies and practices, broad stakeholder engagement, agreement on how to improve leadership, and coordination through strong leadership" (Augustine et al., 2009, p. xviii).

Community of practice: "A community of practice is a unique combination of three fundamental elements: a domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a community of people who care about this domain; and the shared practice that they are developing to be effective in their domain" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 27).

Culture: "A culture is a set of basic tacit assumptions about how the world is and ought to be that a group of people share and that determines their perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and to some degree, their overt behavior" (Schein, 1996, p. 11).

Identification-based trust: The third and highest level of trust in Lewicki and Bunker's (1996) three-stage theory of trust in which "trust is based on identification with the other's desires and intentions ... because the parties effectively understand and appreciate the other's wants; this mutual understanding is developed to the point that each can effectively act for the other" (p. 122).

Loose-coupling: A term used by Weick (1976, Mar.) to describe the lack of strict oversight exercised by school administrators over the core behaviors that take place in the classroom. In a loosely-coupled structure, teachers enjoy great autonomy in the classroom because administrators buffer them from the outside world. When used pejoratively, this means that teachers are not held accountable for their actions; when used constructively, this means that organizations operate under empowering distributed leadership.

Relational trust: A theory of trust employed within the context of schools with four components: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, pp. 22-27).

Romantic leadership: A charismatic view of heroic leadership that masks the complexity of true leadership, "... after Meindl's (1995) argument that leadership is a convenient, phenomenologically legitimate social construction which, nonetheless, makes a complex, multi-sourced bundle of influences on organizational outcomes" (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, p. 469).

Social comparison theory: A tendency to increase one's comfort in the attitudes that one holds by comparing them favorably with the opinions of those with whom one is aligned in some way (Erickson, 1997, p. 101).

Successful educational leaders: "Successful educational leaders develop their districts and schools as effective organizations that support and sustain the performance of administrators and teachers, as well as students. Specific practices typically associated with this set of basics include strengthening district and school cultures, modifying organizational structures and building collaborative processes. Such practices assume that the purpose behind the redesign of organizational cultures and structures is to facilitate the work of organizational members and that the malleability of structures should match the changing nature of the school's improvement agenda" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 9).

Theories-of-action and theories-of-use: Attempts to grapple with systems complexity generate theories-of-action which are abstract sensemaking statements of the general principles that will be employed to enact the ideology of an organization, but these abstractions are often discordant with what people actually do in their day-to-day working lives, that is, in their theories-of-use (Weick, 1995, pp. 121-124).

Transition: The process designed to guide middle-school eighth-graders into ninth grade, which addresses the academic, procedural, and social concerns of rising freshmen (Akos & Galassi, 2004, p. 9).

Trust: "…an individual's belief or a common belief among a group of individuals that another individual or group (a) makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit or implicit, (b) is honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments and (c) does not take excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available" (Cummings & Bromiley, 1996, p. 303).

Trust in schools: "Trust is an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p. 189).

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

The influence of the principal as the leader of his or her school is ranked second

after teaching among school-related factors in its influence on student learning

(Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 3). Leithwood and his associates

called for educational leaders to be responsible for "building a shared vision for their

organizations" (p. 7), but they also noted that such leaders are much more likely to

contribute to student achievement "indirectly, through their influence on other people or

features of their organization" (p. 13). Yet, they also complained about the vagueness (p.

45) of empirical evidence of the link between district policies, leadership activity, and

what teachers do in the classroom to cause gains in student learning.

Having noted that indirect influence takes place at the district-wide and school-

wide levels, where teamwork and professional learning communities are necessary, they

lamented the lack of research into this area (p. 44). Leithwood and his colleagues

pointed out that a high rate of interaction between members of a team is improved

through frequent contact (p. 35). They offered a definition of what educational leaders

must do in order to be effective at the district level:

> Successful educational leaders develop their districts and schools as
>
> effective organizations that support and sustain the performance of administrators
>
> and teachers, as well as students. Specific practices typically associated with this
>
> set of basics include strengthening district and school cultures, modifying
>
> organizational structures and building collaborative processes. Such practices
>
> assume that the purpose behind the redesign of organizational cultures and

structures is to facilitate the work of organizational members and that the malleability of structures should match the changing nature of the school's improvement agenda. (p. 9)

One district-wide initiative that requires attention from middle-school principals and high-school principals is transition planning and implementation for rising freshmen. However, it does not matter if a middle-school-to-high-school transition plan is well articulated if the administrators responsible for implementing it do not trust each other enough to collaborate. Callan (2009), a middle-school principal, was able to study the relationship of middle-school and high-school administrators. Her school system in Maranacook, Maine, restructured a grades 7-12 school into a middle school and high school by relocating the middle-school-age students to a separate building. Callan reported that this process had not gone well; referring to the four principals her school system had hired for the high school since the separation of the middle schools and high schools into different buildings, she wrote, "Each of these principals has had very different views of what the relationship between the high school and middle school should be, resulting in mixed messages to staff and the community regarding the perceptions of change within and across the schools" (p. 11). Although an internal 3-year study had shown that approximately 30% of the freshmen were struggling with the transition, Callan lamented that no formal mechanism existed in her system for middle-school teachers and high-school teachers to communicate (p. 22).

Callan was interested in overcoming these problems, so she familiarized herself with Wenger's "Communities of Practice" and Weick's "Sensemaking" perspective in organizational management (p. 56) and conducted a case study of her own system. She

knew the value of good communication and the importance of trust (p. 56), and she participated in a Comprehensive School Reform Leadership Team (CSRLT) to promote organizational learning between the middle school and high school (p. 77). Callan reported, "It was apparent to me as the principal of a school involved in this effort, that when the high school principal withdrew from the CSRLT, the change efforts at the high school ceased" (p. 115). Leadership responsibilities that span the gap between schools within a system require attention.

In a longitudinal study of the effects of collaborative leadership on school improvement, specifically student reading achievement, Hallinger and Heck (2009) analyzed 192 elementary schools over a 4-year period. They used descriptive statistics to determine that "on average about 12% of the variability in students' reading achievement (and 12% of the growth) lies between schools" (p. 19). In a related study Heck and Hallinger (2009) advocated for distributed leadership but lamented their inability to offer direct insight into how this could be accomplished (p. 681). However, managing distribution of leadership may require more time than most principals can devote to it.

Gilson (2008) ascertained that on average only 13.3% on average of a principal's time is spent on "collaborative leadership" ($N = 145$ Iowa secondary principals) (p. 91). Gilson reported that this might be because principals spend more than 70% of their time on managerial aspects of keeping the institution running, including being highly visible to their constituents both inside and outside the organization. Although this time commitment focuses a principal on the internal operations of his or her school, it could be that student achievement might benefit from increased collaboration between principals as they coordinate transitions from one level to the next.

## Literature Search Procedures

This literature search was conducted primarily through Seton Hall University

Library's databases available remotely through www.shu.edu. Where an article was not

available via this route, I did not pursue it if I judged that another text was sufficiently

similar in topic; however, where I determined that I did need the article, I availed myself

of assistance from a librarian. Databases include the following: Academic Search

Premier, Business Search Elite, Business Search Premier, Dissertations & Theses: Full

Text, EBSCO, ERIC, JSTOR, ProQuest Education Journals, PsychInfo, and Research

Library. The following websites were consulted: http://jar.sagepub.com @ University of

Connecticut, www.JimCollins.com, www.mcrel.org, www.philiphallinger.com,

www.sedl.org, www.sreb.org, and www.waynekhoy.com. Articles were also drawn

from the websites of two advocacy groups: www.wallacefoundation.org, and

www.betterhighschools.org. However, I included articles from the advocacy websites

only if I was familiar with the author(s) from my reading of peer-reviewed journals, or if

the internal consistency of these articles offered empirical evidence. Books were

purchased from Amazon or Ebay/Half.com.

## Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion

The majority of documents included in this first section of the review were

empirical studies into the nature of trust and were drawn from peer-reviewed periodicals.

If a document was not drawn from a peer-reviewed periodical, it was taken from a book,

anthology, or website but only if I knew the authors from other peer-reviewed

publications, or if there was evidence of some degree of expertise or editorial oversight.

Non-empirical articles, such as philosophical inquiries into the nature of trust or

sociological accounts of human interaction were included if they shed light on the nature of trust.

This included how trust affects the leadership of an organization, trust in schools, theories of leadership that support high-trust relationships at the organizational level, transition planning and implementation, and related information. Much research into the nature of trust has been conducted in the fields of business, medicine, and the military, and, where relevant, was included. Articles or books about trust in organizations that could not be applied directly or by analogy to education settings, or that were too philosophical -- as for instance Fukuyama's (1995) *Trust* -- have been excluded from this review. Articles that focus too narrowly on a single aspect of trust, for instance, its relationship to gossip or technology or quality, were excluded.

**Effect Sizes**

Cohen's benchmarks for effect sizes serve as the standard for interpreting the significance of findings where they have been reported in a review of literature. Valentine and Cooper (2003) reported that according to Cohen an effect is small if $d =$ .20 or $r =$ .10, medium if $d =$ .50 or $r =$ .30, and large if the effect size is $d =$ .80 or $r =$ .50. They warned, however, that such benchmarks can only be seen as the "broadest interpretive yardstick" and that they should be used with caution (p. 6). It is important to note, as Slavin and Smith (2009) argued, "... studies with small sample sizes tend to have much larger positive effect sizes than do studies with larger sample sizes" (p. 500). This should give one caution in interpreting the value of a report solely on effect sizes.

In one paper consulted for this study Cooney and Bottoms (2008) drew on data from 3,100 ninth-grade students, whereas Deustch (1958) presented findings based on a

sample of only 18 college students. This is meaningful in terms of Slavin and Smith's (2009) insight that program effectiveness reviews in education can be undermined in terms of their scientific validity and utility (p. 505), and they point out that a larger sampling does not guarantee validity.

## The Need to Understand this Topic

A pre-K through 12 school system in which students attend elementary, middle, and high schools will operate more effectively if the students can move successfully from one level -- and in most cases, building -- to the next without loss of knowledge, skill, or beliefs. However, cultures, missions, goals, and approaches to teaching and learning at these three levels have distinct differences. As an elementary student moves from the familial structure of having one teacher all day to the multi-teacher middle school, where the complexities of early adolescence and emphasis on inclusion frequently clash with increasing academic demands, to the high school where everything suddenly counts for or against the child's future, the leaders of all three levels should work closely to ensure that transitions are smooth, well-designed, and as free of stress as possible. This is not generally the case (Cooney & Bottoms, 2008).

According to a longitudinal study of a single school system's transition of its students from elementary to middle and from middle to high school, Barber and Olsen (2004, p. 25) concluded that ineffective coordination between the schools worked to the disadvantage of their students. In a detailed study of transition practices from middle to high school, Fonts (1998, p. 177) concluded that middle-school principals and high-school principals "did not view transition as a dual responsibility." Fonts determined in

her research that principals understood what the elements of an effective transition plan were, but they did not pursue them in a coordinated manner (p. 178).

Because middle-school principals and high-school principals are frequently separated geographically and culturally, and they often compete for fiscal resources while not having significant time together, they do not have the opportunities to develop trust or trusting communication (Garber, 1991). I will return to the topic of middle to high school transition in a later section. There is first a need to understand the nature of trust and its necessity within organizations that have multiple locations, diverse cultures and common goals.

## Trust

## Definitions: Trust & Relational Theory of Trust

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy collaborated on a number of projects that involve measurement of trust within schools (1998, 1999). In 1999, their definition of trust was operationalized and empirically tested in an urban elementary setting. Their definition was derived from a literature review that yielded 16 definitions of trust (p. 189) and from this they adduced a "five-faceted" definition of trust as, "an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (p. 189). Their definition comports well with Bryk and Schneider's (2002) theory of relational trust.

Restricting their research to school settings, Bryk and Schneider (2002) saw trust as part of a social relationship requiring the discernment of the intentions of another person or group of persons (p. 22). In order to make this discernment and establish a belief about the other person that will drive one's actions, they argued that four factors

must be weighed in one's judgment: First, based on how conversations are conducted within a school, a person will determine the degree of *respect* that another person deserves, which they say involves a recognition of how that person contributes to the successful education of children (p. 23). Second, confidence in a respected person's ability to exert positive influence on the education of a child is established when one makes a judgment about the *competence* of that person (pp. 23-24). Bryk and Schneider emphasized that "gross incompetence" can be corrosive to a school's collective efforts to improve (p. 25). Third and fourth, the trusting relationship requires that the trusting individual observes the display of *personal regard for others* (p. 25) and *integrity* (p. 27) in the object of his or her trust. Thus, their definition of trust involves: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) drew on productivity trends for 450 elementary schools, of which there were teacher background variables available for 397 schools. They also had measurements from their 1994 relational trust survey of teachers for 254 of those schools along with measurements of changes from their 1994 and 1997 surveys for 221 schools. Using general hierarchical multivariate linear modeling (HMLM), they were able to seek an understanding of the relationship between degrees of trust within schools and academic achievement (2002, p. 170). They determined that "many academically improving schools" were in the top quartile on their relational trust scale (p. 111). Further, their model and HMLM analysis measured a positive change in teacher-principal trust from 1994 to 1997 (.6728, $p < 0.001$). Bryk and Schneider observed that relational trust within schools is a core component for improvement.

The unit of analysis for this project will be individual middle-school principals and high-school principals, but it is in the interstices between their buildings that transitions take place, and therefore an examination of trust in working relationships that spans that distance is necessary.

**A Three-Stage Theory of Trust**

In "Developing and Maintaining Trust in Work Relationships" Lewicki and Bunker (1996) offered a three-stage theory of trust as an institutional phenomenon. They argued that colleagues in working relationships could ascend to high levels of trust, which would benefit the institution, if they were willing to make the journey. First, they reported that some working relationships are limited to a low-degree of trust based on the acknowledgement of one's vulnerability to a co-worker, which could be countered by the possession of some means of deterring the other party from taking advantage of them due to some punitive consequence they could inflict. Labeled "calculus-based trust" by the researchers, this low level allows for people to work together because, "trust is sustained to the degree that the deterrent (punishment) is clear, possible, and likely to occur if the trust is violated" (p. 119). The people in the relationship interact because they are capable of inflicting a consequence for having been victimized by the other.

A second, more meaningful level of trust, according to Lewicki and Bunker, is attained by most people who work with others. Identified as "knowledge-based trust" this emerges when parties have information about each other upon which they can project reasonable predictions, even if those are that the other might act in an untrustworthy manner, and this knowledge can improve in its accuracy as the two parties repeatedly interact. This knowledge-based approach allows for rational decision-making to the

extent that one can trust the other, but it does not reach the full flow of benevolence, personal exposure and deep regard for the other party that a genuinely trusting relationship enjoys (p. 120).

The final stage of trust, according to Lewicki and Bunker, is "[i]dentification-based trust" (p. 122). Although they did not make an explicit statement in this essay, it is easy to draw connections between their language and the five facets of trust offered by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness (1999, pp. 186-188). Lewicki and Bunker explained, "The third type of trust is based on identification with the other's desires and intentions. At this third level, trust exists because the parties effectively understand and appreciate the other's wants; this mutual understanding is developed to the point that each can effectively act for the other" (p. 122). These researchers concluded that there is a "stage-wise evolution of trust" (p. 124) in working relationships, but very few co-workers advance to this third stage. They found that some co-workers may lack the time, energy, or inclination to develop a full, rich, and trusting relationship.

**Empirical Measurements of Trust**

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998, 1999) developed an instrument to assess trust within individual schools that would allow them to determine the degree to which principals, teachers, and parents trusted each other. Items were submitted to a principal axis factor analysis with a varimax rotation (p. 192). This led them to design a pilot instrument with 37 items. They reported that measurements yielded by this instrument were reliable: Trust in the principal had an alpha of .95; trust in colleagues had an alpha of .94, and trust in clients (parents and students) had an alpha of .92.

This pilot was subjected to content analysis to ensure that all five facets of trust were included (p. 196), and discriminant validity of the measurement of trust was determined to be strong. The final version of their trust survey was found to "provide reasonably valid and reliable measures of trust." Therefore, it seems reasonable to accept their five-faceted definition of trust as suitable to use in understanding relationships in schools.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) developed two surveys of relational trust (1994, 1997). Hierarchical linear modeling of their 1994 and 1997 instruments yielded correlations of .76 for teacher-parent trust, .80 for teacher-teacher trust, and .62 for teacher-principal trust. This led them to conclude that they were "reasonably confident" that these two instruments assessed the same phenomenon. Bryk and Schneider's theory of relational trust has four criteria for discernment (pp. 22-26), respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity. This theory, as corroborated via their fieldwork in 1994 and 1997, appears to warrant confidence that it can be conceptually applied to this research project.

Cummings and Bromiley (1996) developed an Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI) that, in its revised first person short form (OTI/R), appears to be well suited to the principal-to-principal assessment of organizational trust that I seek to assess. Cummings and Bromiley's OTI was initially developed to measure three aspects of trust as the belief of one person or group that another person or group would (a) keep their commitments, (b) act honestly in negotiations and other interactions, and (c) avoid taking advantage of others when an opportunity is available. Their instrument was designed to assess each of these components according to the affective state, cognition, and intended behavior of the

trusting party. These last three were based on Crites, Fabrigar, and Petty's (1994) "Measuring the Affective and Cognitive Properties of Attitudes: Conceptual and Methodological Issues."

Cummings and Bromiley used Bentler's Comparative Fit Index to determine the validity of their model, (.81) (p. 308). They further used Bentler's Index to determine the composite reliability of the three dimensions of affect, cognition, and behavior, which they found to remain high (.88 – .92) (p. 316). Ultimately, they expressed themselves satisfied that their OTI in its 12 question short form "has acceptable psychometric properties in terms of reliability" (p. 319).

An Italian team collaborated with Bromiley in a 2008 adaptation and factorial validation of the OTI (Vidoto, Vincentini, Argentero, & Bromiley, 2008). This team developed a first-person version of the OTI in a reduced form (12 items) designated as OTI/R. The researchers found that the OTI/R can be reliably and validly applied across a variety of research topics in organizations of differing sizes (p. 571). They concluded that the OTI/R "has better psychometric characteristics than the complete version and that [it] takes substantially less time to complete" (p. 571).

**Placement of the Topic into Broader Literature about Trust**

Viewed from a very wide perspective, it is surprising that so little has been written about trust in the Great Conversation. Philosopher Annette Baier (1986) noted that what can be found among the writings of great moral philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, and Hobbes "can scarcely be said to be even a sketch of a moral theory of trust" (p. 232). It seems entirely likely, as Adler (2001) argued, that trust has been the distant third of three "coordination mechanisms" used to regulate

organizations, market/price, hierarchy/authority, and community/trust. This is probably a result of the evolution of the complexity of both society and organizations. Until a flurry of interest in the mid-1980s through the 1990s, when companies started to recognize that their greatest assets were intellectual property rather than physical holdings, trust was not in the forefront. It was at this time that concepts of Total Quality Management (Crosby, 1984; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Walton, 1986) helped to redefine the nature of leadership (Covey, 1991). In what we have come to call *flatter* organizations, greater responsibility was placed on employees at all levels, and this brought the value of trustworthiness to the center of notions of what constitutes principle-centered leadership (Covey, 1991, p. 251).

It may also be that metaphors drawn from complexity theory, along with advances in desktop computing, led organizational theorists to consider organizations as networks of relationships that generate order out of chaos (Stacey, 1992). Further, the application of systems thinking, introduced to the business world by Senge (1996) in *The Fifth Discipline*, and applied to schools in *Schools that Learn* (Senge, Cambiou-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Bottom & Kleiner, 2000), along with the influence of Fullan's *Leading in a Culture of Change* (2001), has brought forward the exploration of trust as an aspect of school leadership.

I used Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's and Bryk and Schneider's definitions of trust in Table 1 to depict common word usage from the trust literature:

Table 1. Common Terminology Used in Studies of Trust

| Vertical: Tschannen-Moran Horizontal: **Bryk & Schneider** | Respect | Competence | Personal Regard for Others | Integrity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Openness | | | | Mishra (1996) |
| Honesty | | | | Cummings & Bromiley (1996) |
| Competence | | Zand (1972), Baier (1986), Cummings & Bromiley (1996), Mishra (1996), and Schoorman et al. (2007) | | |
| Reliability | | | | Deutsch (1958), Rotter (1967), Whitener et al. (1998), Mishra (1996), and Schoorman et al. (2007) |
| Benevolence | | | Deutsch (1958), Frost et al. (1978), Baier (1986), Cummings & Bromiley (1996), Mishra (1996), Whitener et al. (1998), Molm et al. (2000), Schoorman et al. (2007), Sloyan (2009). | |
| Vulnerability: Swinth (1967), Zand (1972), Mishra (1996), Whitener et al. (1998), Molm et al. (2000), and Schooman et al. (2007). | | | | |

**Empirical Research-Based Findings about Trust**

There has been increasing interest in the nature of trust from the 1950s through 2009. This section includes peer-reviewed, research-based findings and observations from relevant published reviews of literature for non-school based settings.

In 1958, Deutsch used an experimental two-person non-zero-sum game, which was a variant of Luce and Raiffa's "prisoner's dilemma" to tease out which factors involved in mixed-motive interactions could be said to lead to trust. His sample was 18 matched pair of college students, ($N = 36$). He determined that 80% of subjects who

received full communication treatment from the other person in their dyad made cooperative choices in return (p. 274). His definition of trust, however, reflected an individuality in the perceived gain that the person can realize from engaging in trusting behavior:

> An individual may be said to have trust in the occurrence of an event if he expects its occurrence and his expectation leads to behavior which he perceives to have greater negative motivational consequences if the expectation is not confirmed than positive motivational consequences if it is confirmed (p. 266).

Deutsch's construct of trust involved self-awareness that the trusting person places himself at risk when making choices that allow the other person potentially to take advantage of him or her.

Rotter (1967) explained that interpersonal trust entails an expectation held by one person or group that another person or group could be relied upon to act in a manner consistent with their word, promise, or verbal statement of intention (p. 651). Swinth (1967) used Deutsch's definition of trust to create ambiguous scenarios in matched game choices that could potentially benefit or harm a person based on the behavior of the other game player. Participants in his sample of male college students $(N = 99)$ had to make themselves vulnerable in order to advance jointly in the game. Results of his analysis confirmed "two interdependent people can establish trust by exposing their 'selves' to one another and meeting each exposure with acceptance" (p. 343). This was reliable at $p < .05$.

A person must be willing to be vulnerable to the decisions of another in order to benefit from the mutual exchange of actions. The willingness to be vulnerable involves

perceptions of the other party as trustworthy and benevolent, and this engagement is facilitated by open communication. Zand (1972) explored the nature of trusting behavior within the management of a company. He assessed how degrees of trust within managerial problem-solving teams affected the timeliness and openness of their problem solving. Using 16 groups of eight upper-middle managers from an international electronics company ($N = 64$), Zand randomly assigned groups to problem-solving tasks, but half of the groups had low-trust mental models and the other half high-trust models. For Zand, trust was the conscious regulation of one's behavior that involves dependency on the actions of others that will vary depending on task and context. The high-trust models were more efficient at problem solving. Zand wrote, "The results indicated that it is useful to conceptualize trust as behavior that conveys appropriate information, permits mutuality of influence, encourages self-control, and avoids abuse of the vulnerability of others" (p. 238). These results were significant (p < .001) (p. 235).

Frost, Stimpson, and Maughan (1978) assessed how trust affected group dynamics. Using questionnaires completed by graduate students in seven separate group dynamics courses at Brigham Young University ($N = 59$), these researchers sought to determine the degree of expectation that the trusting person had as to another person's or group's altruistic intentions. Results showed that "… trust was invested in others who were believed to have altruistic motives" (p. 108). This was true when respondents reported beliefs about how groups influenced individuals ($p < .01$) and when respondents reported on the degree of influence that they individually had over groups ($p < .05$). Beliefs, however, are not merely cognitive decisions. They involve affective elements as well.

Johnson-George and Swap (1982) surveyed male and female undergraduates at Tufts University's psychology department ($N = 435$, 180 males, 255 females). Their instrument was designed to elicit ratings from respondents as they considered specific others in specific situations involving trust. Subjects expressed more trust in partners when measuring their reliability ($M = 6.35$) than on the Emotional Trust Subscale ($M = 5.81$, $F(1, 18) = 8.61$, $p < .01$) ($p$ 1312).

In 1991 Butler used both semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions ($N = 84$ managers of eastern USA firms) and role-playing to validate the construct of his Conditions of Trust Inventory (CTI), ($N = 132$ undergraduates). Butler stated ten conditions for trust: Availability, competence, consistency, discreteness, fairness, integrity, loyalty, openness, promise fulfillment, and receptivity (p. 648). Based on his results, he reported, "The means of all 10 of the CTI scores for high-trust conditions differed from the means of the corresponding scores for the low-trust conditions at the .0001 level of significance, with a t ranging from 7.8 to 24.6" (p. 656).

There is a connection between individual acts of trust and conceptions of organizational trust. Mishra (1996) synthesized a definition of trust that was later adopted with minor changes by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy. According to Mishra, "Trust is one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is 1) competent, 2) open, 3) concerned, and 4) reliable" (p. 5). Mishra posited an influence of trust within an organization on "decentralized decision making, undistorted communication, and collaboration" (p. 23). This is important because schools are organizations that involve all three of these factors, especially decentralized decision-making. Mishra's decentralized decision-making seems very close in meaning

to "distributed leadership" as recommended by current educational researchers (Augustine et al., 2009; Elmore, 2004; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hallinger, 2003; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004;). This leads to the question of how organizations should be structured to promote collaboration.

According to Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, and Werner (1998), "[b]y designing organizations in ways that encourage managers to initiate trusting relationships, and by rewarding employees for reciprocating, management can establish a foundation for a trusting organization" (p. 527). They developed an Exchange Relationship Framework that included an emphasis on the manager's obligation to engender trust through volitional, trustworthy behavior.

Molm, Nobuyuki, and Peterson (2000) used a controlled experiment with a 2 x 2 factorial design for network interaction to evaluate the reciprocity of exchanges within low-power and high-power networks. Molm and her colleagues randomly assigned 140 undergraduates to conditions and positions within low-power and high-power networks ($N = 140$) and measured their interactions with a 7-point bipolar semantic differential scale. They found that trust cannot evolve without risk:

> ... reciprocal forms of exchange, in which actors individually provide benefits to each other without knowing what returns they will receive, provide a more fertile ground for the development of trust than negotiated exchanges with binding agreements ... [and] that risk is a necessary condition for the development of trust, which then depends on the partner's behavior (p. 1422).

They found that, "in the low-power network with reciprocal exchange ... the average commitment of A and B to each other increased significantly over time in this condition ($t$ = 2.34; $p$ < .05, two-tailed test)" (p. 1416).

Organizations have leaders. These might be the titular heads and managers, or some other coalition of employees. Schein (1996) explained the presence in all organizations of three vibrant subcultures, operators, technicians, and managers. Zand (1972) reported that high-trust problem-solving groups work more productively than low-trust groups do. Schoorman, Mayer and Davis (2007) reviewed literature that cited quasi-experimental applications of their four-item measurement of vulnerability, The Integrative Model of Organizational Trust. For the purpose of their review, they defined trust as one's willingness to be vulnerable to another party (p. 347). They report that another research group's quasi-experimental fieldwork using their model had results that were significant ($N$ = 22 & $N$ = 57) with an average interitem [sic] correlation of $r$ = .32 (p. 347). Trust must be viewed from an organizational vantage. "The trust of either the dominant coalition or the management team is critical to understanding organizational trust, since it is this level of trust that will govern the strategic actions of the organization..." (p. 346).

**Observations about Trust from Non-experimental Studies**

In "Market, Hierarchy, and Trust" Adler (2001, May/Apr) argued that the three terms in his title were the traditional means of handling knowledge-based assets in organizations, and that, of the three, trust is the most promising for promoting institutions that belong to "effective knowledge-intensive inter-firm networks" (p. 225). Adler wrote this paper as an outgrowth of a presentation he made in 1997 at the University of

California at Berkeley forum titled "Knowledge and the Firm" (p. 231). Adler asserted that where assets are physical (i.e., a fleet of trucks) managers can rely on pricing mechanisms functioning in a relatively free and stable market to manage the economy. Also, where institutions are large and there are clear distinctions between the intellectual requirements, social structure, and position of labor and management, then market forces can be aligned within top-down hierarchies to control the operation of organizations.

Adler pointed out that, in a knowledge-intensive economy, rising levels of education within the work force and the growing availability and explanatory power of scientific knowledge necessarily lead to a divestment of decision-making power to employees at every level of the organization. He said,

> ... the vertical differentiation of hierarchy is effective for routine tasks, facilitating downward communication of explicit knowledge and commands, but less effective when tasks are non-routine, because lower levels lack both the knowledge needed to create new knowledge and the incentives to transmit new ideas upward (p. 216).

He called trust the "crucial ingredient" for "high-commitment vertical relations between employees and management and in collaborative horizontal relations between specialists groups" (p. 220). One conclusion he drew is that leaders must accept that their legitimacy will not derive from their title or position but from "grounding [trust] in open dialogue among peers" (p. 227).

Hansen (1999) offered evidence that both "weak-ties" and "strong-ties" between inter-organizational units have a role to play in improving systems. When weak-ties link two distinct units in an organization, the relationship between the two, if it takes the weak

form of "regularly occurring informal contact" can foster the exchange of novel approaches to goal achievement. On the other hand, strong-ties between units can foster the exchange of complex information if they are facilitated by "a heavyweight team leader who coordinates teamwork, gains resources for the team, and works across functional boundaries" (p. 108). He cautioned, however, that strong ties within a single team could lead the team to becoming overly inward in its focus, "causing the team to neglect using interunit [sic] relations to search for and transfer useful knowledge from other subunits" (p. 109). The main finding of his study was that the timeliness of completing a joint project was contingent on the complexity of the task and the strength of the tie between the two units. Where the task was simple, the two groups could be weakly linked. However, complex tasks required strong inter-unit ties (p. 105). Hansen's research was in the field of manufacturing not education, but his findings shed light on the relationship that should take place between middle schools and high schools.

**In-group and Out-group Bias and Distrust**

Kramer, Brewer, and Hanna (1996) found a relationship between the willingness of individuals within an organization to engage in trusting behavior and the salience and strength of their identification with the organization. Where an employee identified with his role and membership in an organization, he or she trusted the others within that group. Conversely, if that same employee perceived others as members of a different group, he or she was more likely to treat them with suspicion or distrust. Arguing that identity-based trust is a social construct, they concluded, "the very things that make trust easy to confer on insiders may render the presumptive trust of outsiders more problematic" (p. 382). Kramer, Brewer, and Hanna were picking up on a well-defined field of research,

notably including Elias and Scotson's (1994, pp. 167-173) configuration theory set forth in *The Established and the Outsiders*, in which they demonstrated how in-group identification leads one to trust the members of a group to which one is affiliated while attributing all sorts of nefarious biases and personal shortcomings to those who affiliate with some other group. (See also, Lewin, 1997, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics," [originally published in 1947] p. 329, and Hewstone, 1990).

Erickson (1997) defined this same tendency as social comparison theory when she explained, "People feel uncomfortable when they are not sure that their attitudes are correct, especially if the attitudes are important in a particular context. Since there are no objective standards for attitudes, people can judge their own correctness only by comparison with the attitudes of others" (p. 101).

**Research Regarding Trust in School Settings**

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy collaborated to conduct research projects on trust in school (1998, 1999) and Tschannen-Moran published an additional article in 2001. Because their definition of trust is central to this review of literature, this discussion will focus on them, first, before turning to Bryk and Schneider (2002).

In 1998 Tschannen-Moran and Hoy administered two surveys, the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for middle schools (OCDQ-RM) and the Organizational Health Index for middle schools (OHI-M) to 2,741 teachers at 86 middle schools ($N = 86$). The surveys had been designed to collect data on the beliefs of respondents that others were acting in authentic ways, that is, consistent with general expectations of trustworthiness and that others were trustworthy. Tschannen-Moran and

Hoy used a definition of trust that addressed this confidence in the predictability of others:

> Trust is a general confidence and overall optimism in occurring events; it is believing in others in the absence of compelling reasons to disbelieve. In the context of organizations, trust is a work group's generalized expectancy that the words, actions, and promises of another individual, group or organization can be relied on (p. 7).

They determined the following:

> Results of the multiple regression between the two measures of authenticity and the two measures of trust ... [reveal] [s]ixty percent of the variance in faculty trust in the principal ($R[sup]2$ = .601) is explained by the authenticity of the teacher and principal behavior, however, only authenticity of the principal behavior (*Beta* = .828, $p$ <.01) makes a significant independent contribution. Likewise, only authenticity of teacher behavior (*Beta* = .528, $p$ < .01) makes a significant contribution to teachers' trust in their colleagues (p. 10).

From this data we can see that the middle-school principal independently controls the level of trust that the faculty will invest in him or her based on the authenticity of that principal's behavior (*Beta* = .828, $p$ < .01). As philosopher Annette Baier (1986) observed, "Trust is easier to maintain than to get started and never hard to destroy" (p. 242).

Bryk and Schneider (2002) proposed a relational theory of trust, in which the interactions between members of a faculty, including the principal, contribute to student achievement. One finding was that high-trust school communities clustered in the top

quartile of student achievement in their study (p. 111). They used HMLM analysis to assess a change in teacher-principal trust from 1994 to 1997 (.6728, $p < .001$). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) researched the perceptions of trust between three categories of people at 45 urban elementary schools ($N = 45$). They surveyed teachers, principals, and parents and conducted a factor analysis on the results. Teachers who reported that they trusted other teachers were more likely to trust their "clients," i.e., students and parents, and their principal; parental collaboration was, using Cohen's terminology, large, for faculty trust in them (r = .79, p < .01). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran reported:

> Trust in the principal was related to trust in colleagues (r = .7, p < .01) and trust in clients [students and parents] (r = .42, p < .01). Trust in colleagues was correlated with trust in clients ( r = .35, p < .01) .... The correlations for all three dimensions of trust were statistically significant with parental collaboration, for faculty trust in the principal (r = .45, p< .01), for faculty trust in colleagues (r = .37, p < .01), and for faculty trust in parents (r = .79, p < .01) (p. 203).

The correlation between trust in colleagues and trust in the principal had an $r = .7, p < .01$.

In a follow-up study, Tschannen-Moran (2001) used the same database and analyzed via bivariate correlational analysis the proposition that the more a principal collaborated with his or her faculty, in this case urban elementary schools, the more trust the faculty would invest in the principal. She was able to use 898 individual surveys from these 45 schools. Her results: "As predicted, collaboration with the principal was positively and significantly related to trust in the principal ($r = .32, p < .50$)" (p. 324).

In 2000, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy undertook a comprehensive review of literature that examined trust from the vantage of the school system. They broadened their definition from how individuals view others to how groups view other groups within a school system. Their definition of trust in this case applied the five facets of trust to the "collective judgment" of groups "from an organizational perspective" (p. 551.). Taking up the question of the reform movement in American schools, they cited trust as "required" in order for sustainable progress to be made. In their words, "New forms of governance such as site-based management, collaborative decision making, and teacher empowerment depend upon trust.... In short, if schools are to realize the kinds of positive transformations envisioned by leaders of reform efforts, attention must be paid to issues of trust" (p. 585).

**New Perspectives about Leadership and Transition: What Still Needs to be Done**

The partnership of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy and the collaboration of Bryk and Schneider have established the positive impact of trust within schools. Yet, almost no research in the field of middle-school to high-school transitions has examined the role of middle-school principals and high-school principals in terms of the degree of trust that they invest in each other. Where principals were mentioned in transition literature, as for instance Queen (2002, pp. 111-112) or Akos, Queen, and Lineberry (2005, pp. 101-102), almost nothing was said of this relationship other than a call for jointly-held meetings. Most articles were about transitioning from elementary to middle school.

**Practical Significance of the Research**

The design and daily function of middle schools and high schools might create and maintain isolating interstices between the leadership of both schools. This could lead

to what Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) have called a "knowing-doing gap." Fonts (1998) found that most principals know what components of a successful transition process should be operating, but they do not collaborate to implement them. I seek to provide the data that will focus middle-school principals and high-school principals on the value to students that can be brought forth through improvements in their relational trust of each other. In the second section of this review I will examine research into the middle-school to high-school transition process.

**The Need to Understand this Topic**

Success or failure in the freshman year of high school is directly connected to on-time graduation rates and dropout rates (Kennelly & Monrad, 2009). In their article, "Easing the Transition to High School," Kennelly and Monrad cited 2006 research by Gray, Sable, and Sietsema, which showed that student enrollment rates in high schools nationwide were greatest in grade 9 because many students were dropping out before getting to grade 10. Using 2004-2005 numbers, they reported that in 2003-2004 there were 4.19 million freshmen, but only 3.75 million sophomores in the following school year, a loss of 10.5% (p. 2).

Kennelly and Monrad cited research by Letgers and Kerr 2001 that, "[m]ost high school dropouts fail at least 25% of their ninth-grade courses, while 8% of high school completers experience the same difficulty" (p. 3). They also cited Williams and Richman's research that (a) linked repeating the freshman year with high dropout rates, (b) identified this as a particularly severe problem for African American and Latino populations, and (c) explained that 29 of 51 states saw their greatest decreases in

enrollment during ninth grade (pp. 2-3). These data indicate a need to improve student achievement and retention during the freshman year.

Cohen and Smerdon (2009) identified the middle-school to high-school transition as a key point in a student's academic, social, and emotional trajectory. Cooney and Bottoms (2008) referred to the transition as a "weak link" and called for greater academic preparation in middle school (including algebra, reading, and high expectations) in order for students to be placed in higher-level, more challenging freshman courses.

Horwitz and Snipes (2008) observed "one of the most obvious reasons students struggle in high school is that they arrive academically unprepared" (p. 2). In addition to calling for increased attention to literacy instruction and reading comprehension skills, they stated that high-school-reform strategies cannot stand in isolation from system-wide efforts to improve education at elementary and middle school levels, explaining, "… it is unrealistic to expect high schools to sufficiently address academic deficiencies built up over the entire course of a student's academic career" (p. 8). When coordination among the different levels of school is required, attention must be paid to the role of principals at each level in the educational pipeline. Cauley and Jovanovich (2006) emphasized the need for communication between middle schools and high schools. They called for middle-school personnel to communicate the academic achievement, special needs, and behavioral profile of rising ninth-graders and for high schools to let these students and their families know about the building, policies, services, programs, and expectations.

The role of the principal in guiding the implementation of the transition process has not been the focus of transition research. A review of 44 dissertation précis from 1983 through 2009 generated by searching with a variety of key words, including *middle*

*school*, *high school*, and *transition* reveals an interest in five aspects of transition

practices (see Appendix A). Of 44 dissertations, 19 were programmatic reviews that

included the following subtopics: academics, personalization, support mechanisms,

Catholic versus public schools, program coherence, freshman teams, academies and

seminars, discipline specific studies (i.e., math), and school characteristics. Fifteen were

about student, parent, or staff perceptions of the transition from middle to high school.

Five were about student needs, including psychological aspects of transition, students

with special education needs, and resiliency. Two were about middle-school, internal

structures. Three were about the role of leadership in transition. However, one of these

was a case study about the organizational restructuring of a junior high to a middle

school, and thus does not apply to this review of literature. Two of the 44 studies were

conducted in the 1980s, 8 in the 1990s, and 34 since 2000.

Articles found in trade publications or on advocacy websites include lists of

activities that can help students transition from one school to the next (Akos, Queen, &

Lineberry, 2002; Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006; Hertzog & Morgan, 1997; Kennelly &

Monrad, 2009; Mizelle, 2005; Queen, 2002). These articles and books offered practical

suggestions that rely more on experience, or what Achilles, Reynolds, and Achilles

(1997) called "planned actions of an informed professional" (34).

**Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion**

Articles were included in this section if they had been published in peer-reviewed

periodicals. Literature about the efficacy of different kinds of transition programs or the

impact of transitions on certain populations were not included. Although limited in

availability, data that shed light on the role of the principal, particularly in longitudinal

studies relevant to students in terms of academic, social, and procedural aspects of the transition from middle schools to high schools, and comparisons of middle-school principals' and high-school principals' perceptions on the importance of transition programs and their implementation, were included. Also included were factors that establish the value of freshman year to a student's success in high school and the dangers that grade 9 can bring.

**Findings from Empirical Research-Based Studies of Transition**

Alspaugh (1998) used an ex post facto study of three groups of 16 school districts ($N = 48$) in Missouri to assess achievement loss with transitions to middle school and high school. He determined that students entering high school from (a) a K-8 setting, (b) a linear model of one middle school to one high school, or (c) a pyramid model of several elementary schools to several middle schools to one high school all experienced achievement losses from grade 8 to grade 9 although the pyramid structure had the largest loss followed by the linear middle school and then the K-8 structure. When combined ($N = 48$) the loss was significant at the $p < .000$ level with a t value of 4.52, where $M = 8.69$, $SD = 14.50$.

Effective transition planning and implementation is important for students with low-income status from urban, predominantly minority backgrounds (Reyes et al., 2000). Drawing from the U.S. Department of Education, Reyes and colleagues reported that urban eighth-grade to tenth-grade dropout rates for 1992 were 8.9%, as contrasted with 5.4% for suburban students and 6.8% for rural children (p. 520). Reyes's team conducted a longitudinal pre-transition and post-transition comparison of surveys for eighth graders from two public, inner-city K-8 schools into high schools in Chicago. The population

was predominantly Latino and low-income ($N = 107$). They examined a number of factors including academic performance. Results indicated that students who remained active, that is, were present through graduation, and students who became inactive, that is, dropped out during high school, both experienced academic declines from grade eight to grade nine. Both groups experienced declines in grade-point averages [$F(1,102) = 15.8$. $p < .05$, $R^2 = .37$]. Reyes and associates described the change in scores for those who became inactive as "sharp" when compared with those remaining active in school: Inactive, change score $M = -1.39$, $SD = .77$; Active, change score $M = -.83$, $SD = .67$ (p. 533). The researchers observed that negative perceptions of school were greater for those who remained active than their inactive counterparts, and they attributed this to those destined for inactivity having already given up on school as a supportive environment before getting to high school. (Active, change score $M = -.60$, $SD = 1.4$; Inactive, $M = .11$, $SD$ 1.3) (p. 532). They found that all but six of the 107 students experienced a drop in freshman grades, but those with lesser grade declines tended to graduate. Their research underscored the dire need to address transitions.

Barber and Olsen (2004) undertook a longitudinal assessment at each year from fifth through ninth grade of a cohort of students as they advanced from elementary school to middle school, and from middle school to high school. In their own words, they "tested a range of aspects of students' functioning that can be expected to be impacted by worsening conditions of connection, regulation, and respect for psychological autonomy corresponding to the transition to new school structures" (p. 9). They drew data from the National Institute of Mental Health-funded Ogden Youth and Family Project, a longitudinal study of families with adolescents in Ogden, Utah ($N = 933$, 71% White, [of

which 16% were Hispanic,] 84% middle income, 46% Mormon). One caveat they note is that a higher percentage of Mormons were represented among their respondents to their follow-up mailings. They used repeated measures ANOVA with a single contrast for time to test student functioning and perceived school environment.

Barber and Olsen (2004) identified three levels of concerns from the students: academic, personal, and interpersonal. They applied Eccles' Stage-Environment Fit Theory to a longitudinal study of the need for psychological autonomy that develops as a student advances upward through the grades. They examined the correspondence between (a) transitioning to a new school environment and the student's (b) school performance, specifically homework, grades, and activities, (c) psychological functioning, as assessed by self-esteem, depression, and loneliness, (d) social competence, that is the quality of relationships with adults and peers, and finally (e) behavior problems (Barber & Olsen, 2004, p. 9). The advantage of the design of Barber and Olsen's research is that they were able to track the same group of students within a school system in suburban Utah as they transitioned from fifth through ninth grade. They gathered data on 24 items under these five categories: School environment, school performance, psychological functioning, interpersonal competence, and problem behaviors. Their findings serve to underscore the toll that a transition from middle school to high school can take on the members of a freshmen class. Of the 24 variables they assessed, they noted changes in 10 of which 8 were negative:

> Compared to their reports the previous year, ninth graders reported less liking of school, higher perceived need of school organization, lower support from teachers, lower support from principals and assistant principals, less monitoring

from teachers, lower classroom autonomy, less involvement in school activities, lower self-esteem, and higher depression. The only positive change was lower aggression. (p. 18)

This continued a trend in negative perceptions by students of most grade-to-grade transitions. The majority of changes from seventh grade to eighth grade were negative also. Of the 24 items measured in the transition from sixth to seventh grades, 17 were different from the previous year, and fully 16 of them were negative.

Barber and Olsen (2004) tabulated the means of these variables across the five years of their study. Student perception of support from their principals and assistant principals was the lowest during the high-school transition coming out at 1.91 on a five-point response set. They determined there was, in fact, a steady decline from fifth grade through ninth grade on this assessment: 2.44 (5th), 2.39 (6th), 2.23 (7th), 2.20 (8th), and 1.91 (9th). These data were significant at $p < .05$.

Barber and Olsen (2004) noted a similar perception of teacher support, which students reported as decreased at every transition. Similarly, there was less of an increase in deviant peer association, parent-child conflict, and depression where student perception of the loss of teacher support was not as great (p. 22). Students need to know that the adults working for them are aware of their needs and in charge. The researchers showed "... that higher levels of perceived regulation in the school environment at a transition predicted enhanced student functioning at the same transition (higher social initiative with teachers, t = 2.46, p < .01 and peers, t = 1.96, p < .05 for seventh graders and more participation in school activities for ninth graders, t = 2.65, p < .01)" (p. 23). One of their major conclusions was that decreases in student perceptions of the adequacy

of the school environment correspond with decreases in student functioning. A change in school environment can create the conditions that erode positive student perceptions and experiences; there is a concomitant increase in the imposition of rules to stop deviant behavior (p. 25).

Akos and Galassi (2004) administered surveys with a Likert-type item response and open-ended response options. They used inferential statistical analysis to interpret the former data and coded the latter in order to employ descriptive statistical analysis on them. Data were collected from 71% of ninth graders in a single high school ($N = 320$, 47.8% male, 50.3% female, 1.9% non-specified gender), along with 61 parents and 17 teachers.

Among their findings was the recognition that students, parents, and teachers interpret the transition differently:

> For the high school sample, the three groups also differed significantly in the perceptions of the difficulty of transition, $F (2, 382) = 6.83$, $p < 001$. In contrast to the middle school data, post-hoc comparisons revealed that high school students ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 0.86$) viewed the transition as 'somewhat easy' and significantly easier than both parents ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 0.92$) and teachers ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 0.73$), and that this time the parents did not rate the transition as significantly easier than the teachers rated it. (p. 5)

Akos and Galassi concluded that parents and teachers had a "reasonably good appreciation" of what their students' concerns were. The concerns fell into three broad categories, academic, social, and procedural. Student concerns about transition identified increased homework (35%), social and organizational changes (25%), and grades (16%)

as their greatest concerns. One recommendation suggested by survey respondents was increased communication between middle-school principals and high- school teachers about the curriculum and academic expectations (p. 9). Like so much of the literature in this area, the authors of this article were relatively silent about the role of administrators in facilitating the transition process, although Akos and Galassi noted that the school system where the study was conducted had previously implemented "substantial transition programming" (p. 7).

Fonts (1998) determined, in part, that middle and high school principals report similar beliefs on the importance of transition programs, but "their behaviors do not acknowledge their perceptions" (p. 178). She found that principals at the two levels did not necessarily apply all elements of a transition that they believed to be important (p. 178), that they did not perceive the transition process as a dual responsibility (p. 177), and that lack of communication between the two was a concern (p. 180).

Table 2. Fonts's 30 Items for Transition Practices

| |
|---|
| 1. Evening orientation at the high school. |
| 2. Summer picnic for entering ninth graders. |
| 3. Panel of former ninth graders visits the middle school to share high school experiences and perceptions. |
| 4. Study habits workshops for ninth grade students. |
| 5. Eighth graders spend a day at the high school and follow a ninth grade schedule. |
| 6. Presentation of school activities by high school students. |
| 7. Parent meeting at the high school for the purpose of orientation. |
| 8. Parent meeting with student and counselor for the purpose of course selection. |
| 9. Parent meetings throughout the year for continued orientation. |
| 10. Parent instruction on adolescent development. |
| 11. Encouragement of parent involvement with the school. |
| 12. Attendance policy review with parents. |
| 13. Faculty-student advisors. |
| 14. Guidance orientation at the middle school by high school counselors. |
| 15. High school teacher visitation of the middle school. |
| 16. Middle school teacher high school visitation. |

| 17. Teacher workshops on curriculum planning. |
|---|
| 18. Teacher professional development on the ninth grade adolescent. |
| 19. Ongoing assessments with regularly scheduled meetings of middle school and high school representatives. |
| 20. Student mentors. |
| 21. Meetings between ninth and eighth grade counselors. |
| 22. Curriculum information to students and their parents in January and again in the fall. |
| 23. Schedule students in small units for personalization purposes. |
| 24. Decision-making classes for students. |
| 25. Booklet explaining the transition plan from grade eight to nine. |
| 26. Letters to eighth grade students from ninth grade students. |
| 27. Data sharing on students entering or leaving a school. |
| 28. Letters to students and the parents of soon-to-be ninth graders. |
| 29. Middle school and high school principal communication on the articulation of transition practices. |
| 30. Transition panel of students, teachers, parents and administrators. |

Fonts (1998) determined that middle-school principals and high-school principals implemented different practices. Middle-school principals clustered their transition activities, first, into instruction of teachers, parents, and students and, second, group interpersonal meetings. High-school principals focused on communicating with groups involved in the transition to ninth grade (p. 82). Fonts also determined that there were significant differences ($p \leq .05$) between the two groups in their perceived importance of three items involving parents: Parent meeting of student and counselor for the purpose of course selection ($p = .023$, $X^2 = 9.569$); parent meetings throughout the year for continued orientation ($p = .031$, $X^2 = 8.884$); and, parent instruction on adolescent development ($p = .038$, $X^2 = 8.432$) (p. 84). She did not find significant differences for the other 27 items.

One of Fonts's conclusions was "… principals still do not view transition as a dual responsibility. It is imperative that middle and high-school principals experience transition to ninth grade at a high school from eighth grade at a middle school as a

function of both levels" (p. 177). Another conclusion, based on her analysis of demographic variables, was that "[p]rincipals are not currently using what they perceive to be important" (p. 178). This led Fonts to call for "a study to discover communication practices of principals and their impact on student transition to ninth grade ..." (p. 180).

**Findings from Syntheses of Literature about Transitions**

Mizelle (2005) expressed a concern that, if current dropout trends continue, one in seven children born in the United States will not graduate from high school (p. 56). She also noted difficulties in the freshman experiences of many students and called for school districts to recognize that transition is an "extended process" that must be jointly implemented by parents, students, teachers, and middle-school administrators and high-school administrators. She considered "vertical teams" to be an excellent structure for facilitating implementation.

Queen (2002, pp. 163-177) articulated 12 research-based factors for successful transitions. As with almost all articles and books published for practitioners, not researchers, the role of the principal was taken for granted. Where Queen mentioned the role of the principal, he called for the principal to delegate responsibilities to a transition team and to play an important role in the transition by "attempting to establish and maintain a working relationship between the middle and high school principals" (p. 25). Akos, Queen, and Lineberry (2005) recommended that principals jointly conduct informational sessions (p. 101).

Table 3: Queen's twelve factors for successful transitions

| |
|---|
| Factor One – The lower the student's grades dropped during ninth grade transition, the higher the student's probability of dropping out of school. |
| Factor Two – Students who fail during the transition and dropout (sic) of school experience lifelong difficulties physically, socially, emotionally, and economically. |

| |
|---|
| Factor Three – The larger the high school, the greater the negative impact on transition on ninth grade students. |
| Factor Four – Students, once in school, who experience two or more transitions prior to ninth grade have a greater probability of quitting high school. |
| Factor Five – High school dropout rates are higher for middle school students than for students attending K-8 schools. |
| Factor Six – Ninth grade students' adjustment to high school is complicated by their perceptions of a bigger school, different environment, changed class schedule, and by smaller classes. |
| Factor Seven – Fear of getting lost in the high school building is by far the number one fear of ninth grade students. |
| Factor Eight – Ninth grade students view high school teachers as less helpful than middle school teachers. |
| Factor Nine – Ninth grade students must have at least one adult in their lives for genuine support in order to become academically and socially successful. |
| Factor Ten – Ninth grade students who have negative experiences during the transition period have poor attendance, low grades, and fewer friends. They tend to become behavior problems and have greater vulnerability to negative peer influence. |
| Factor Eleven – Dropout rates will increase for poorly transitioned students, especially minority students, in schools using high stakes testing. |
| Factor Twelve – Social and economic factors negatively impact graduation rates, especially in large urban areas (pp. xii-xiii). |

## Stage-Environment Fit Theory

Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan, et al. (1993) examined

the fit between the needs of early adolescents for greater autonomy and the opportunities

afforded to them when they moved from upper-elementary schools into junior high

schools, generally sixth to seventh grade. Using their stage-environment fit theory, they

suggested that there would be negative psychological consequences for students if there

were a mismatch between their developing needs and the opportunities afforded to them

by their new social environments. Their large-scale, 2-year longitudinal study on the

influence of changes in the school and classroom environments on the beliefs, behaviors,

motivation, and values of early adolescents (The Michigan Study of Adolescent Life

Transitions [MSALT]) analyzed the transition of approximately 1,500 students in 12 districts who advanced into sixth and then seventh grade. In one subset, they studied 1,300 students to determine the effect of high-or-low-support teachers on math achievement. They found that students moving from high-support elementary teachers to low-support junior high teachers experienced a decline in the degree to which they valued math achievement, whereas students moving from low-support elementary to high-support junior high schools experienced a gain, and they stressed the risk to low-achieving students as they moved into less-supportive environments. Based on this and other studies, they found that the stage-environment fit theory does have merit. Although their study examined the move from elementary schools to junior high schools, the concept of stage-environment fit sheds light on the transition from middle school to high school. If the needs of the students are not met in the new environment, then they will be at risk for underachievement.

# Chapter III

# DESIGN AND METHODS

## Research Problem

Although a successful transition from middle school to high school can contribute to a rising freshman's academic and social success, middle-school principals and high-school principals do not fully collaborate to implement comprehensive transition programs (Fonts, 1998); this may be due to a lack of trust between the two levels of administrators.

## Research Questions

#1. What is the relationship between the degree of trust that middle-school principals and high-school principals invest in each other?

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between the degree of trust that middle-school principals and high-school principals invest in each other.

#2. What is the relationship, between the degree of trust middle-school principals and high-school principals hold for each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition planning?

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between the degree of trust middle-school principals and high-school principals hold for each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition planning.

*Table 4: Research Matrix*

| Research Question #1 | Population/Sample/ Data Source | Instrumentation | Data Collection Technique | Data Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| What is the relationship, between the degree of trust that middle- | Middle-school and high-school principals working in the same school system whose grade eight students | Organizational Trust Inventory – Reduced Form (OTI/R) Vidotti, Vincentini, Argentero, and Bromiley (2008). A first-person revision and update of Cummings and Bromiley's 1996 | Survey: Via regular mail on a printed version with a stamped self- | Because this is a basic relational question, analysis of the correlation will |

| school principals and high-school principals invest in each other? | become high school freshmen. Participating schools would be up to 69 school districts in Connecticut that have one middle school and one high school. For the sake of continuity, the sample will be restricted to middle schools with grade 8 as their last year, and high schools with grade 9 as their first year. | Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI). This inventory measures the belief one person has that another will (1) behave in good faith with his/her commitments, (2) proceed with honesty, and (3) not take advantage of others on a 7-point: Disagree (1) through Agree (7). This draws, in turn, from the work of Crites, Fabrigar, and Petty's (1994) measurement of affective and cognitive properties of attitudes. Questions include: 1. "I feel that ____ takes advantage of me." 2. "I feel that I can depend on ____ to negotiate honestly with me." 3. "I feel that I cannot depend on ____ to fulfill his/her commitment to me." 4. "I think that ____ negotiates agreements fairly." 5. "I feel that ____ is straight with me." 6. "I think that the people in ____ succeed by stepping on other people." 7. "I think ____ keeps the spirit of an agreement." 8. "I feel that ____ will keep his/her word." 9. "I think ____ does not mislead me." 10. "I think that ____ takes advantage of my weaknesses." 11. "I think that commitments made to our ____ will be honored by the people in ____." 12. "I feel that ____ takes advantage of people who are vulnerable." | addressed envelope. | take the form of a Pearson 'r,' (Pearson Product-Moment Correlation); Two Independent-Samples t-Test; Kruskal-Wallis Test |
| Research Question #2 | Population/Sample/ Data Source | Instrumentation | Data Collection Technique | Data Analysis |
| What is the relationship between the degree of trust middle-school principals and high-school principals hold for each other and the comprehen-siveness of their | The same middle-school principals and high-school principals as in question # 1. | Based on a review of literature, which generated 57 recommended practices for middle-school-to-high-school transition programs, a list of 28 practices, of which 14 require direct action of middle-school principals and high-school principals, and 14 require indirect action of principals was developed. Feedback from 25+ working administrators at middle schools and high schools was analyzed in order to ensure the wording of the survey complied | Survey: Via regular mail on a printed version with a stamped self-addressed envelope. | Pearson's 'r' correlation, (Pearson Product-Moment Correlation); Frequency Distribution; Two Independent-Samples t-Test; Kruskal-Wallis Test |

| transition planning? | | with Fowler and Cosenza's (2009) criteria for effective question design. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

## Design

### A Non-experimental, Explanatory Cross-Sectional Survey Design

This study will use a simple non-experimental, explanatory, cross-sectional design. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) stated, "Cross-sectional designs are effective for providing a snapshot of the current behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs in a population" (p. 176). Data for this format can be gathered at a single point in time, and a survey can be used to collect information relatively easily. Trusting relationships involve behaviors that are based on attitudes and beliefs. One set of behaviors is the collaboration shared by principals on transition programming. Further, the eighth-to-ninth grade transition activities in this study are behaviors that are directly or indirectly under the control of the principals in the sample. Therefore, this design is appropriate.

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) addressed the nature of correlational studies. They pointed out that use of the Pearson $r$ is appropriate when "both variables to be correlated are expressed as continuous (i.e., ratio or interval) data" (p. 201). Further, they identified the minimally acceptable sample size for a study of this nature as 30 participants (p. 196). The response sets for the survey used in this study will be expressed continuously in 7-point interval scales.

Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs (2003) provided Pearson's formula for determining the product-moment correlation coefficient (p. 100),

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\sum z_x z_y}{n - 1}$$

They explained that this formula can be used to determine the relationship between two variables if two conditions are met: First, the two variables must be "paired observations" and second, the variables being correlated must be measured on an interval or ratio scale (p. 104). Both conditions have been met in the design of this project. Two groups of administrators, one composed of middle-school principals and the other composed of high-school principals, will each be invited to respond to survey questions using a numbered, 7-point continuous scale – a frequency scale from never (1) to always (7) for items related to transition programs and a 7-point range from disagree (1) to agree (7) for the Organizational Trust Inventory/ Revised Version (OTI/R) (Vidotto, Vincentini, Argentero, & Bromiley, 2008).

Table depicts the four possible relationships:

Table 5: Trust and Implementation – Four Possible Relationships

|  | High Trust | Low Trust |
|---|---|---|
| High Frequency of Implementation | High to High | High to Low |
| Low Frequency of Implementation | Low to High | Low to Low |

**Additional Forms of Data Analysis**

In addition to the Pearson product-moment correlation, data analyses will include descriptive statistical analysis, independent samples t-tests, frequency distribution, and the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis testing.

Descriptive statistical analysis is used in the classification and summarization of numerical data (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003, p. 12). Researchers also analyze descriptive statistics to check assumptions about populations (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008, p. 17). Given the similarities of the two samples in this study, it is worthwhile to

seek measures of central tendency in their responses to the trust survey and the implementation of transition practices survey. Where Pearson's *r* is used by a researcher to determine a basic, correlational association between various groups, descriptive statistical analysis is used by a researcher to seek basic differences between two samples (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008, p. 11). From this a researcher can know if the distribution of a normal curve for one sample is statistically similar or not similar to the distribution curve of another sample. Knowing the mean (average) and standard deviation for each group can allow the use of an independent samples t-test, which could yield the more informative result of indicating differences. By examining differences, I can generate recommendations on how principals might act to improve trust and develop more comprehensive transition programs. I also want to know if there are differences in their implementation of transition practices.

A frequency distribution was constructed for the 28 items in the survey. This was completed in two stages. The first stage for Questions 1 through 14, which involve the direct oversight and action of principals, and the second stage for Questions 15 through 28, which involve the indirect action of principals. In Chapter IV, data is presented in descending order from items with the highest mean score to those with the lowest mean score. This allowed for a ranking of transition activities.

The 30 respondents from middle schools and the 30 from high schools can be divided into various groupings for further analysis. The Pearson product-moment correlation sorted the responses into the two samples by school level. These principals were subsequently divided into a high-trust and low-trust grouping, using the mid-point

score of 42 out of a possible 84 total points on the scale; This allowed the use of two independent samples t-testing to seek basic differences.

Additionally, all 60 sets of responses were divided into three categorical groups, low trust, medium trust, and high trust. This involved non-parametric testing for small sample sizes. A non-parametric test can be conducted when one is searching for differences between three or more nominal (categorical) groupings, and when samples are very small in size. Pallant (2007) explained that non-parametric tests are not as powerful as parametric tests, but they have value when one wants to compare groups (pp. 210-211). One such non-parametric test is the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance. According to Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs (2003), the null hypothesis for a Kruskal-Wallis test is that the population distributions from which the samples were selected are the same (p. 578). Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis test, therefore, can allow a researcher to seek for differences among groups.

According to Witte and Witte (2007), the formula for a Kruskal-Wallis Hypothesis test for three or more independent samples is as follows:

$$H = \frac{12}{N(n+1)} \left[ \sum \frac{R_i}{n_i} \right] - 3(n+1)$$

In a Krusal-Wallis test, the value of H is assumed to be the same for three or more populations: $H_0$: population A = population B = Population C. The alternative to this null hypothesis is $H_1$: $H_0$ is false. If a null hypothesis can be rejected, then a researcher can claim that there are statistically significant differences among the three groups.

The Kruskal-Wallis test was appropriate for this project. If there were no differences among the three trust groupings, in terms of null hypothesis one, There is no

relationship between the degree of trust that middle-school principals and high-school principals invest in each other, this would lead to a failure to reject the hypothesis. If there were no differences among the three groupings in terms of null hypothesis 2, There is no relationship between the degree of trust middle-school principals and high- school principals hold for each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition planning, then this would lead to a failure to reject the hypothesis. In this study the results of a number of Pearson product-moment analysis, and that of various two independent-samples t-tests can be confirmed or confounded via the use of Kruskal-Wallis tests.

A list of all forms of testing that will be reported in the results and interpretation chapter is included at the end of this chapter.

## Method for Gathering Data

A letter of solicitation and a copy of the survey were sent via regular mail and/or email to middle-school principals and high-school principals in 64 Connecticut public school districts ($n = 128$). These districts were selected because they are public and have a linear progression from elementary school to middle school to high school, keeping them within the delimitations of the project.

Each principal received correspondence with directions on how to complete a printed version of the survey and a request to return it via a stamped, self-addressed envelope (see Appendix C). Both the 28-item transition practices survey and the 12-question Organizational Trust Inventory, Revised Short Form (OTI/R) (Vidotto, Vincentini, Argentero, & Bromiley, 2008) were administered successively in the same survey (see Appendix D). Anonymity of the respondents was assured.

A period of several weeks was allowed for initial responses to be returned, and a reminder email was sent during the third week. The number of respondents in each category was monitored until a minimum number of 30 respondents from both categories submitted the survey. Responses were tabulated on SPSS (PAWS) software, version 17, and will be maintained on secure storage devices (USB drives), and these data will be stored in a secure location for a minimum of 3 years.

According to Anseel, Lievens, Schollaert, and Choragwicka (2010), there are nine response-enhancing techniques (pp. 336-337) that can be employed to increase the percentage of responses to the administration of a survey. They note that top executives of organizations have a response rate on average of only 37%, whereas the rate of return of other respondents is 52.7% (p. 336), so enhancement techniques were important to the solicitation of principals for this project. Only three of their response-techniques were not used in the administration of this survey: (1) Giving advance notice of the survey, (3) providing incentives for completion, and (8) hand-delivering the survey. The remaining six methods were used in this study: (2) Follow-up reminders, (4) Personalized mailing, including the recipient's address and a hand-signed solicitation letter, (5) Salience to the recipients, (6) Use of anonymous identity protection, (7) Sponsorship affiliation with a major university, and (9) Using a pen-and-paper response format rather than an online version (p. 341). The response rate for this study was 60/128 or 46.9%; this indicates a successful approach.

**Instrumentation: Survey of Trust**

Permission was secured from Philip Bromiley to use the Organizational Trust Inventory/Reduced Form (OTI/R), which has been refined into a first-person format and

validated by Vidotto, Vincentini, Argentero, and Bromiley (2008). Due to its brevity and narrow focus on trust, this is a suitable instrument for this project. According to these researchers, "trust reduces transaction costs in and between organizations" (p. 303). They approached trust as a belief that one holds, which shapes his or her behavior,

>Trust will be defined as an individual's belief or a common belief among a group of individuals that another individual or group (a) makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit or implicit, (b) is honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments and (c) does not take excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available (p. 303).

This definition is similar to that of Mishra (1996), Bryk and Schneider (2002) and Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999). It aligns with Lewicki and Bunker's (1996) "knowledge-based trust" and it does not contradict any of the other definitions previously offered in Chapter II of this study. Testing led them to conclude, "[t]he explanatory power of the short form was almost identical to that of the long form" (p. 319).

The original Organizational Trust Inventory used a 7-point response set ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, but I converted this into a 7-point interval scale ranging from disagree to agree, using numbers to provide the range of response options:

> ☐ Disagree (1)  ☐ 2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐ Agree (7)

Recognizing that this may raise the question of whether this constitutes a true interval scale, it is worth commenting on what Dawis (1987) called "...an old and continuing debate..." between "the proponents of measurement [who] hold that level of measurement (nominal, ordinal, ratio) constrains the kinds of statistical procedures that

can be applied to the numerical data... [and] the proponents of statistics [who] maintain that, '(t)he numbers do not know where they come from' (Lord, 1952, p. 751)" (p. 487). If the respondents are able to understand the meaning of the stem of an item and accurately identify their intended response on the scale, then the design of the scale can be successful.

According to Davies (2008), there are benefits to a hybrid design that incorporates both numerical options and anchor terminology at specific points on the scale (pp. 137-138). Davies's design used both a numerical continuum and descriptive terms, (e.g., Unsatisfactory, Exceptional,) in an attempt to create a "simple response-friendly design" (p 138). One finding from Davies's study is that 88 of 90 respondents were able accurately to use the extreme range of exceptional on Davies' 8-point scale, the other two using one 7 and one 6. This is relevant because the results of the trust survey administered in this study yielded 48.3% of all 60 responses as combinations of 6s and 7s of which 16 respondents (31.7%) selected all 7s on the principal-to-principal trust scale. Even if the 7-point range posed accuracy challenges, it is probable that those who reported a high degree of trust or a low degree of trust were able to communicate their intent by selecting the extremes. Fowler and Cosenza (2008) reported that the use of at least 7 points on a rating scale improves the quality of the assessment (p. 151).

**Instrumentation: Survey of Transition Practices**

The development of the best practices survey began with a review of literature (Anderson, 2008; Cooney & Bottoms, 2009; Fonts 1998; Hertzog & Morgan, 1997; Horwitz & Snipes, 2008; Kennelly & Monrad, 2009; Mizelle, 2005; Queen, 2002;). Many of these publications recommended specific practices that would contribute to a

successful transition for some students. The most thorough of these was Fonts (1998) *Transition to Ninth Grade: A Study of Practices and Trends*, which offered research-based analysis of 30 practices. I created a matrix of additional practices that had not been included in Fonts's work, but were recommended by the other authors cited above (see Appendix B).

This generated a list of 82 possible items. However, many of these recommendations were directed at the district-level, policy-making of Central Office staff, and were therefore discounted. I adduced a potential list of 57 items.

Using Akos and Galassi's (2004) finding that the concerns of future freshmen fell into three broad categories -- academic, procedural, and social -- I arranged this list into a series of groupings that linked the transition activities to these concerns. Following Spector's (1992) flow chart for the design and construction of a survey, I based my construct on Akos and Galassi's work. Spector's sequence is as follows: Design the Construct, Design the Scale, Pilot the Test, Administration and Item Analysis, and Validate/Norm the final version (p. 8). The conceptual frame for identifying the items to be used in the survey had two aspects: First, the activity had to address one or more of Akos and Galassi's three categories of concerns; second, the transition activities had to be divisible into those under the direct control of principals and those conducted by other members of the learning community. Therefore, I presented a matrix of 57 choices to my administrative colleagues and had them label each as meeting an academic, procedural, or social concern of rising freshmen, or some combination of the three. I also sought input on the initial design and wording of these items from Virginia King, a member of the faculty of the Western Connecticut State University School of Education. Taking this

feedback into account, I was able to narrow the number of items I applied to this study. The 57 transition activities (see Appendix B) are divided into seven sets: First, 11 items describing transition practices involving academic, procedural, and social aspects of transition; second, five items addressing academic and procedural aspects; third, four items addressing academic and social aspects; fourth, 14 items related to academic concerns; fifth, five items addressing procedural and social aspects of navigating freshman year; sixth, five items addressing procedural concerns; and seventh, 13 items about social concerns of rising freshmen.

The design of the 28-item transition survey is based on the work of survey design methodologists (Campanelli, 2008; Converse & Presser, 1986; Finstad, 2010; Fowler & Cosenza, 2008; Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2009; Spector, 1992). According to Fowler and Cosenza (2008) effective survey questions must meet the following four needs of survey respondents:

> In order to answer a question to produce a valid measure of a construct, respondents have to: (a) understand the questions as intended, so they know what is being asked of them; (b) have, or be able to retrieve, the information needed to form an answer; (c) be able to fit what they have to say into the form in which they are required to answer; and (d) be willing to provide what they deem to be the most literally accurate answer they can. (p. 158)

I refined the list of items from the original 57 to 28 by selecting 14 that involve the direct action of middle-school principals and high-school principals and 14 that require the indirect action of middle-school principals and high-school principals. However, I was careful to ensure that this selection continued to include all three aspects of Akos and

Galassi's (2004) categories of concern. When these 28 items were added to the 12 items on the trust survey, the total survey included 40 items and required 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Although additional transition practices could have been included, concerns about the number of respondents who would complete the entire survey led to this limit.

Feedback on the wording of these items was solicited via an online survey from education leaders with experience at the middle-school level and high-school level. Based on recommendations from Converse and Presser (1986) that "a pretest N of 25-75 is reasonable" (p. 69) along with Campanelli's (2008) synthesis of research into sample size that identified the following ranges: 25-75, 15-30, 10-25, 20-50 (p. 179), I settled on a minimum sample respondent pool of 20. The feedback survey was distributed online to approximately 60 administrators who were asked to evaluate the 28 items using Fowler and Cosenza's (2008) criteria, and modifications were made to the wording based on the responses of 21 administrators. See Table below.

The next task was to establish an appropriate series of fixed responses. Because the results were correlated via Pearson $r$ analyses, that is, the Pearson product-moment correlation, and the design of the Organizational Trust Inventory/Reduced Form (OTI/R) (Vidotto, Vincentini, Argentero, & Bromiley, 2008) uses a 7-point rating set, a suitable 7-point frequency set was developed for the transition survey. This draws on Finstad's (2010) observation that "... the 7-point scale may represent a 'sweet spot' in survey construction. That is, it is sensitive enough to minimize interpolations and is also compact enough to be responded to effectively" (p. 108). Therefore, the following frequency scale was also field-tested with the item feedback: Never (1), Rarely (2),

Occasionally (3), Regularly (4), Frequently (5), Almost Always (6), and Always (7). The numbers were subsequently added to guide respondents along an interval scale.

I received feedback on five aspects of the design of each of the items in the survey via online responses from 21 administrators who have experience at the middle-school and/or high-school levels. The stem of each item was drawn from one of eight locations: Fonts (1998), Hertzog and Morgan (1997), Akos and Galassi (2004), Mizelle (2005), Horwitz and Snipes (2008), Kennelly and Monrad (2009), Cooney and Bottoms (2010), or my own experience as transition coordinator and assistant principal in charge of freshmen. I asked respondents to rate each stem in these areas:

#1. Did the stem address a single aspect of the eighth to ninth transition process?

#2. Was the wording of the item ambiguous?

#3. As an administrator at the middle school or high school level, would one be able to respond accurately from memory?

#4. Could the respondent place his or her response on the 7-point frequency scale? (Never, rarely, occasionally, regularly, frequently, almost always, and always.) Note: In the live version, a number was added to each of these response options in order to make it more of an interval response.

| Never (1)　　Rarely (2)　　　　Occasionally (3)　　Regularly (4)　　Frequently (5) |
|---|
| Almost Always (6)　　Always (7) |

#5. Should the stem be reworded to improve clarity?

The following table displays three parts of the feedback for each item: (a) The percentage of respondents who believed they could accurately place their responses on the frequency

scale, (b) the number who indicated a desire for rewording, and (c) whether the stem was reworded.

Table 6  Pilot Testing Feedback on Transition Survey

| Item | Percentage who Could Use Frequency Range | No. Desiring Rewording of Stem | Stem was Reworded | Item | Percentage who Could Use Frequency Range | No. Desiring Rewording of Stem | Stem was Reworded |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 85.7% | 1/21 | Yes | 15 | 90% | 0 | |
| 2 | 81% | 2/21 | | 16 | 80% | 1/20 | Yes |
| 3 | 90.5% | 1/21 | Yes | 17 | 85% | 0 | Yes |
| 4 | 76.5% | 2/21 | Yes | 18 | 85% | 0 | Yes |
| 5 | 66.7% | 0 | Yes | 19 | 85% | 1/20 | Yes |
| 6 | 71.4% | 2/21 | Yes | 20 | 90% | 2/20 | Yes |
| 7 | 71.4% | 1/21 | Yes | 21 | 90% | 0 | Yes |
| 8 | 90.5% | 0 | Yes | 22 | 75% | 0 | Yes |
| 9 | 85.7% | 1/21 | Yes | 23 | 80% | 0 | |
| 10 | 85.7% | 0 | Yes | 24 | 95% | 1/20 | Yes |
| 11 | 85.7% | 3/21 | Yes | 25 | 95% | 0 | Yes |
| 12 | 81% | 0/21 | Yes | 26 | 95% | 0 | Yes |
| 13 | 81% | 2/21 | Yes | 27 | 85% | 3/20 | Yes |
| 14 | 81% | 1/21 | Yes | 28 | 95 | 0 | |

I limited my rewording of any stem to the single purpose of stating the transition activity in a manner that met Fowler and Cosenza's (2009) criteria for the construction of survey stems (p. 158).   One potential problem of this study is that a follow-up beta test was not conducted to refine the revised format.

**Determining Cronbach Alpha for the Complete Survey**

The final version of the instrument has three sections.  The first contains 14 statements about the transition process that require the direct action of principals in order to be accomplished.  The second contains 14 statements that require the principals' indirect actions because they are carried out by other members of the school system.  The third section is the Organizational Trust Inventory (Vidotto, Vincentini, Argentero, & Bromiley, 2008).

The full 40-item survey was sent to three groups of middle-school principals and high-school principals. First, 44 administrators with experience at middle school or high school who are members of the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut Tri-State Consortium, a coalition of high-performing school districts of which I am a member, received an email with a request to complete a trial version of the survey. Second, members of Seton Hall's Executive Educational Doctoral Program, Cohort XIII, received a request for the trial version to be advanced to their middle-school principals or high-school principals. Third, principals known to me who work in Connecticut school districts with more than one middle school were also invited to complete the trial version. A total of 25 middle school and high-school principals responded ($N = 25$).

Using SPSS Version 17 software, a series of Cronbach alphas was run on the combined survey instrument. The Cronbach alpha is a statistical analysis that determines if items in a survey are correlated and will make good components of a rating scale (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008, p. 50.) According to them, a Cronbach alpha rating should be above .70, although they acknowledge that it is common to see journal articles with an alpha of .60-.69. This was the case for the 40-item survey, with the exception of the middle-school principal's split file alpha for the entire survey, which dipped to .507, but this was likely due to the low number of middle-school principals ($n = 6$) who completed the entire survey. Subsection analysis for each of the three component sections of the survey, presented below, yielded alphas at or above .70.

SPSS version 17 software was used to determine the Cronbach alpha for the total sampling of the two groups of principals (middle school and high school). Given a combined valid response by 15 principals, the overall Alpha for the 40-item survey was

.809 and .783 for standardized items. When an alpha was run for Section 1 only, 19 responses were valid with a rating of .805 and a rating of .839 for standardized items. Section 2 had an alpha of .739 with a standardized item rating of .721. This was based on 17 responses. Section 3, which includes the twelve-item Organizational Trust Inventory of Bromiley and colleagues (2008), had an Alpha of .827 and a standardized item alpha of .852. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the instrument has merit.

A further set of reliability estimates was run using a split-file approach in which the responses of middle-school principals and high-school principals were separated. It must be noted that the number of valid responses in this initial phase was low for the subset of middle- school principals ($n = 6$), but here again all alpha ratings were above .40. The overall rating was .507 although the standardized-item rating was .336. This was due to many respondents not completing the entire survey. On the other hand, nine high-school principals whose responses were valid yielded a Cronbach alpha of .907 (.911 for standardized-item responses). When the subset of middle-school principals' responses to Section One only ($n = 7$) were analyzed, the overall Alpha was .735 with a standardized-item alpha of .784. There were 12 valid responses from the high-school principals, with an Alpha of .845 (standardized-item .883) for Section One.

The Cronbach alpha for Section 2 is also acceptable. Seven middle-school principals gave valid responses to these 14 items, with an alpha of .684 (standardized-item .674). For the same section, ten high-school principals' responses attained an Alpha of .781 (standardized-item .764). Thus, again, we see an acceptable rating for reliability.

The final section had a .736 (standardized-item .828) for the subset of middle-school principals ($n = 9$) and a .894 (standardized-item .893) for the subset of high-school

principals ($n = 11$). I concluded from these various ratings that the instrument was reliable and useful to gather data via a live field test.

## Participants

Of 171 public school systems in Connecticut, 65 are structured to have their students progress from one middle school to one high school. Of these 65, Oxford High School has been operating for only 3 years, and was, therefore, not included, leaving 64 possible schools. For the purpose of clarity, solicitations to complete the transition and trust survey were limited to the middle-school principals and high-school principals in these districts, but it was not necessary for both principals within a school system to respond.

## Data Collection

Principals received a print copy of the survey and a stamped return envelope for their convenience. Respondents were asked not to identify themselves in any manner. This ensured anonymity for the respondents. A period of several weeks was allotted for collection. I entered all responses into the SPSS version 17spreadsheet.

## Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Pearson $r$ analysis. Additional analysis included independent samples t-tests, frequency distributions, descriptive statistical analysis (mean and standard deviation), and the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test. Bryk and Schneider (2002) concluded from fieldwork they conducted in 1994, "surveys could reliably measure relational trust in school communities" (p. 93). Further, according to Vidotto, Vincentini, Argentero, and Bromiley (2008), "we find extremely high correlations between affective and cognitive components of the trust dimensions" (p. 570). They also

concluded, "this trust measure has reliability and validity when applied across a large variety of research topic [*sic*], and organizations that may vary from global firms to specific departments or units" (p. 571).

SPSS (PAWS) version 17 software was used to conduct this analysis. The Organizational Trust Inventory – Reduced Form (OTI/R) (Vidotto, Vincentini, Argentero, & Bromiley 2008), has already been determined to be both valid and reliable. The transition survey has been examined for internal consistency reliability via Cronbach alpha measurement. According to Leech, Barrett, and Morgan (2008), this is an appropriate approach (p. 46). Analysis of the relationships posed in the two null hypothesis statements was conducted in a manner recommended in *SPSS 16.0 Brief Guide* (SPSS, Inc., 2007) and *SPSS for Intermediate Statistics: Use and Interpretation* (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). The authors explain that SPSS allows for bivariate regression analysis according to general linear modeling (pp. 77-91).

Cohen's benchmarks for effect sizes serve as the standard for interpreting the significance of findings where they have been reported in a review of literature. Valentine and Cooper (2003) report that, according to Cohen, an effect is small if $d = .20$ or $r = .10$, medium if $d = .50$ or $r = .30$, and large if the effect size is $d = .80$ or $r = .50$. However, Gay, Mills, and Araisian (2009) point out that "a correlation criterion-related validity of .60 for an affective measuring instrument may be considered high because many affective instruments tend to have low validities" (p. 198). Data analysis will place me in a position to accept or reject the two null hypotheses.

Correlational research is humble in its aspirations. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) explained that a correlational study is sometimes used simply to describe an

existing condition (p. 196), and at other times to pave the way for more complex follow-up studies: "Relationship studies serve several purposes: First, they help researchers identify related variables suitable for subsequent examination in causal-comparative and experimental studies.... Second relationship studies provide information about the variables to control for in causal-comparative and experimental research studies" (p. 200). This study was designed to seek basic relationships between trust and implementation. Further studies will be necessary.

## Analysis of Results

The following is a list of the sequence of tests that will be reported in the next chapter:

1. A Pearson product-moment correlation on degrees of trust invested in each other by middle-school principals and high-school principals. (Descriptive statistical analysis for mean and standard deviation was run for all Pearson r tests.)

2. An Independent samples t-test on these two groups seeking statistical differences between the two groups in terms of trust.

3. A Pearson product-moment correlation between degrees of trust and the comprehensiveness of middle-school-to-high-school transition planning for all 28 transition activities in the survey.

4. An Independent samples t-test seeking statistical differences between middle-school principals and high-school principals in terms of their frequency of implementation of transition practices.

5. An Independent samples t-test seeking statistical differences between middle-school principals and high-school principals in terms of their trust in each other.

6. A similar battery of tests, both Pearson product-moment correlation and An Independent samples t-tests were run for the survey in two sub-sections: The first 14 items, which involved the direct action of principals, and the second 14 items, which involved the indirect leadership of principals.

7. A Frequency distribution for the OTI/R Interval trust scale for all 60 respondents with descriptive statistics for the mean, median, and mode.

8. An Independent samples t-test seeking statistical differences between principals whose responses rose above or fell below a score of 42 out of a possible 84 on the trust survey.

9. An Independent samples t-test seeking statistical differences between principals separated into high or low trust in terms of their implementation of items 1 through 14 on the transition survey.

10. An Independent samples t-test seeking statistical differences between principals separated into high or low trust in terms of their implementation of items 15 through 28 on the transition survey.

11. Non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis testing for principals who were recoded into three groups according to trust levels (low = <42, medium = 43-76, and high 77-84) in two sections: How these groups were distributed on the complete 28-item transition survey; how these groups were distributed on the complete trust survey.

12. A Frequency distribution on the total number of responses ($N = 60$) to degrees of implementation for each of the 28 transition practices, including a

breakdown of responses by middle-school and high-school levels, and the mean and standard deviation for all 60 responses.

13. A recoding of the frequency of responses into three categories: the bottom three responses (never, rarely, and occasionally), the middle response (regularly), and the top three responses (frequently, almost always, and always). This was reported in two parts: First, items 1 through 14 requiring the direct action of principals, and second, items 15-28 requiring the direct action of others, with the principals indirectly involved.

## Chapter IV

## RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

### Size of Data Sample and Collection Process

Determining the size of a sample involves decisions on four aspects of statistics:

the level of significance ($\sigma$), the power of the test ($1 - \beta$), the standardized effect size ($d$),

and the direction of the test (two-tailed) (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003, p. 321). These

decisions must be made in order to avoid two kinds of error: First, a Type 1 error might

occur when a researcher rejects the null hypothesis when it is, in fact, true. This error

occurs when the researcher believes that there is a relationship between two variables

when there isn't. Second, a Type 2 error might occur when a researcher fails to reject a

null hypothesis when it is, in fact, false. It is the task of the researcher to determine a

sample size that balances these two possible errors. According to Pallant (2007, p. 205),

the possibility of a Type 1 error can be minimized by selecting an appropriate level of

significance ($\sigma$), generally .05 and .01. But the alpha ($\alpha$) is inversely related to the

probability of retaining a false hypothesis ($\beta$), and so the size and power of the sampling

must be weighed against each other (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003, p. 305). Pallant

recommends setting the power ($1 - \beta$) at .80 (p. 206).

Using Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs' (2003) table for determining sample size,

because I had two treatment groups and desired a power of .80 with an $\alpha$ of .05, I learned

that an appropriate size sample for determining a difference between groups of .75 $\sigma$ was

29 respondents per group (p. 654). This is consistent with Gay, Mills, and Airasian's

identification of 30 as a suitable minimal size for educational research of this nature (2009, p. 196).

Data collection occurred over a 1-month span beginning in the last week of March, 2011, and closing near the end of April, 2011. One hundred and twenty eight surveys were mailed to 64 middle-school principals and 64 high-school principals with return, stamped envelopes included. The collection period was closed when 30 responses from middle-school principals and 30 responses from high-school principals were received. All data analysis was conducted on SPSS (PAWS) data analysis software, version 17.

## Homogeneity of Responses

Because the two samples of principals in this study are similar, the question of homogeneity of responses and the possible effect on responses must be raised. According to Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs (2003, p. 107) "As the group under study becomes increasingly homogenous on one or both variables, the absolute value of the correlation coefficient tends to become smaller." They also observe "[i]n general, the size of the group does not affect the size of the correlation coefficient" (p. 108). The implication for this study is that the results of comparisons between middle-school principals and high-school principals in public Connecticut districts with a single middle school that advances its students to a single high school will have to be interpreted *for this particular grouping*. Generalization to larger school systems or those with other structures (i.e., multiple middle schools or alternative high schools) will have to be cautiously drawn.

## Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

1. What is the relationship between the degree of trust that middle-school principals and high-school principals invest in each other?

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between the degree of trust that middle-school principals and high-school principals invest in each other.

2. What is the relationship between the degree of trust middle-school principals and high-school principals hold for each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition planning?

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between the degree of trust middle-school principals and high-school principals hold for each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition planning.

## Quantitative Research Results for Null Hypothesis 1

A Pearson product-moment correlation was run between the degree of trust invested in each other by middle-school principals and high-school principals. The goal was to determine if there were a relationship between the trust that each group invested in the other. Descriptive statistics for the two groups determined the sample mean for the middle-school-principal-to-high-school-principal trust scale was $M = 71$, $SD = 17.86$, and $n = 30$, and the sample mean for the high-school-principal-to-middle-school- principal trust scale was $M = 67.93$, $SD = 16.78$, and $n = 30$. Table presents the results:

Table 7: Pearson's r Test of Middle School and High School Principal-to-Principal Trust

| Middle School Trust | Middle School Trust | High School Trust |
|---|---|---|
|     Pearson Correlation | 1 | .658** |
|     Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
|     N | 30 | 30 |
| High School Trust | | |
|     Pearson Correlation | .658** | 1 |
|     Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
|     N | 30 | 30 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The degree of trust that each group invests in the other is statistically significant ($r$ = .658, $n$ = 60, and $p$ < .01). The relationship between the trust invested by middle-school principals in their high-school principal partners, and high-school principals in their middle-school partners is medium-to-large (e.g. > 0.5 but < 0.8) (Pallant, 2007, p. 208). This allows us to reject the first null hypothesis: There is no relationship between the degree of trust that middle-school principals and high-school principals invest in each other. Because the relationship is strong and positive, we can conclude that middle-school principals and high-school principals in this sample do, on the whole, trust each other.

An independent samples t-test determined that the mean differences between the two groups, middle-school principals ($M$ = 71, $SD$ = 17.86) and high-school principals ($M$ = 67.93, $SD$ = 16.78), were not statistically significant. Table presents this data:

Table 8: Two Independent Samples T-Test for Principal-to-Principal Trust

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variance | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trust Summary | $F$ | Sig. | $T$ | $Df$ | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Equal variances assumed | .019 | .890 | .685 | 58 | .496 | 3.06667 | 4.47495 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | .685 | 57.7 | .496 | 3.06667 | 4.47495 |

The degree of trust each group (middle-school principals and high-school principals) invests in the other is not statistically different from that which each group receives from the other.

**Quantitative Research Results for Null Hypothesis 2**

A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was run between the degree of trust shared by middle-school principals and high-school principals and the comprehensiveness of their middle-school-to-high-school transition programming. Descriptive statistics for both categories are as follows: The mean of the trust scale summary inclusive of all principals is $M = 69.47$, $SD = 17.25$; the mean of comprehensive transition practices is $M = 91.4$, $SD = 26.1$, $p < 0.01$; the following table presents the results of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation.

Table 9:  Pearson's r Test for Trust and Transition Correlation

| Q1Q28Summary | Q1Q28Summary | Trust Summary |
|---|---|---|
| Pearson Correlation | 1 | .424** |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | | .001 |
| *N* | 60 | 60 |
| Trust Summary | | |
| Pearson Correlation | .424** | 1 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | |
| *N* | 60 | 60 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is a moderate, positive correlation between (a) the frequency with which transition practices are implemented and (b) the degree of trust invested by middle-school principals and high-school principals in each other:  $r = .424$, $p < 0.01$.  This indicates a relationship in which the implementation of transition practices increases as the trust shared by principals also increases. However, this does not mean that there is a causal connection between the two.  What it means is that the increased presence of one aspect of this relationship tends to be associated with an increased presence of the other.

Further, when an independent sample t-test for equality of means was run there was no statistically significant difference between the frequency of implementation of transition practices as reported by middle-school principals ($M = 85$, $SD = 26.35$) or high-school principals ($M = 97$, $SD = 24.62$). The table presents this data:

Table 10: Two Independent Samples t-Test for Frequency of Implementation of Transition Items and for Principal-to-Principal Trust

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variance | | | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1Q28 Summary | $F$ | $Sig.$ | $T$ | $df$ | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Dif. |
| Equal variances assumed | .344 | .560 | -1.194 | 58 | .057 | -12.80 | 6.58619 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -1.194 | 57.7 | .057 | -12.80 | 6.58619 |
| Trust Summary | $F$ | $Sig.$ | $T$ | $df$ | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Dif. |
| Equal variances assumed | .019 | .890 | .685 | 58 | .496 | 3.06667 | 4.47495 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | .685 | 57.8 | .496 | 3.06667 | 4.47495 |

Both groups report similar frequencies in the elements of transition that they employ in their school districts. There was also no statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of the degree of trust reported for middle-school principals ($M = 71.00$, $SD$ 17.86) and high-school principals ($M = 67.93$, $SD = 16.78$).

The twenty-eight questions in the grade 8 to grade 9 transition survey were divided into two sub-groups. The first set of 14 items, questions 1-14, involved the direct actions of the principal in overseeing, organizing, or enacting the transition practice. For instance, item 3 is worded, "The middle-school principal and the high-school principal work together to oversee the $8^{th}$ to $9^{th}$ grade transition." The second set of 14 items, questions 15-28, involved the indirect actions or leadership of the principal, meaning some other member of the staff or school community enacted the transition practice. For instance, item 15 is worded, "A panel of high school students visits the middle school to share their high school experiences and perceptions of life as freshman." This division of

the transition practices into those directly involving principals and those indirectly

involving principals meant that further analysis could be conducted.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was run comparing the degrees of trust

shared by middle-school principals and high-school principals and the 14 transition

practices that require direct action by principals. The goal was to determine if there were

a relationship between degrees of trust and the comprehensiveness of implementation of

transition practices. Descriptive statistical analysis shows that the mean for Questions 1 –

14 is $M = 48.53$, $SD$ 16.70, and the mean for principal trust scale is $M = 69.46$, $SD$ 17.25

with an $n = 60$. The following table shows the results of the Pearson Product-Moment

Correlation.

Table 11: Pearson's $r$ Test for Principal-to-Principal Trust and Items 1 – 14 of Transition

| Q1Q14Summary | Q1Q14Summary | Trust Summary |
|---|---|---|
| Pearson Correlation | 1 | .438** |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | | .001 |
| N | 60 | 60 |
| Trust Summary | | |
| Pearson Correlation | .438** | 1 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | |
| N | 60 | 60 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

These results indicate a relationship between the degrees of trust shared by principals and

the frequency with which they engage directly in eighth-to-ninth grade transition

activities. The relationship is moderate and positive. This indicates that as the degree of

trust goes up so does the frequency of direct principal engagement in the transition

process: $r = .438$, $p < 0.01$.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was also run comparing the principal-to-

principal trust scale and the 14 transition activities involving indirect leadership by the

principals. Descriptive statistical analysis for both groupings showed that the mean for

Question 15 – Question 28 was $M = 42.87$, $SD = 12.0$, and the mean for the principal

trust scale was $M = 69.5$, $SD = 17.25$. The following table shows the results of the

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation:

Table 12: Pearson's $r$ Test for Principal-to-Principal Trust and Items 15-28 of Transition

| Q15Q28Summary | Q15Q28Summary | Trust Summary |
|---|---|---|
| Pearson Correlation | 1 | .314** |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | | .015 |
| N | 60 | 60 |
| Trust Summary | | |
| Pearson Correlation | .314** | 1 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .015 | |
| N | 60 | 60 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

These results indicate a moderate-small relationship between the degree of trust shared by

middle-school and high-school principals and the frequency with which members of their

staff or student body engage in eighth to ninth grade transition activities. A rise in one of

these variables is associated with a rise in the other, but this does not mean there is

necessarily a cause-effect relationship between the two, $r = .314$, $p < 0.05$. It makes

sense that principal-to-principal trust would have less of an impact on those aspects of the

eighth to ninth grade transition that are completed by other members of the school

community than was the case for questions 1 through 14.

These three tests were all statistically significant: (a) the degrees of trust scale for

principals and the entire transition survey (Q1-Q28, $r = .424$, $p < 0.01$), (b) the portion of

the transition survey involving the direct action of principals (Q1-Q14, $r = .438$, $p <$

0.01), and (c) the portion of the transition survey involving the indirect action of

principals and the direct action of other members of the school community (Q15-Q28, $r =$

$.314$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, I am reject the second null hypothesis: There is no

relationship between the degree of trust middle-school principals and high-school

principals hold for each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition planning. I conclude that there is a relationship between the degree of trust shared by middle-school principals and high-school principals and the comprehensiveness of their transition programming.

## Homogeneity of Frequency of Responses

Examination of the 60 responses to the principal-to-principal trust survey required additional analysis. The twelve questions composing the trust survey took the wording of Organizational Trust Inventory/Reduced Form (OTI/R) (Vidotto, Vincentini, Argentero, & Bromiley, 2008). A perfect score on the assessment for complete trust would be an 84; a minimal score indicating no trust would be a 7. A frequency distribution was run for the trust score for all 60 survey responses, but this time no distinction was made between middle school and high school levels. The mean for the trust scale distribution was 69.46, the median was 76, and the mode was 84. The chart identifies the frequency of respondents at each reported score:

Table 13: Principal-to-Principal Trust Scale Frequency Response

| Trust Score | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.7 |
| 29 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 3.3 |
| 30 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 5.0 |
| 33 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 6.7 |
| 34 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 8.3 |
| 41 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 10.0 |
| 44 | 2 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 13.3 |
| 45 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 15.0 |
| 46 | 2 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 18.3 |
| 50 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 20.0 |
| 55 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 21.7 |
| 58 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 23.3 |
| 59 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 25.0 |
| 60 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 26.7 |
| 63 | 2 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 30.0 |
| 66 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 31.7 |

| 68 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 33.3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 72 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 35.0 |
| 73 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 36.7 |
| 74 | 3 | 4.9 | 5.0 | 41.7 |
| 75 | 4 | 6.6 | 6.7 | 48.3 |
| 76 | 2 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 51.7 |
| 77 | 1 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 53.3 |
| 78 | 3 | 4.9 | 5.0 | 58.3 |
| 79 | 3 | 4.9 | 5.0 | 63.8 |
| 82 | 3 | 4.9 | 5.0 | 68.3 |
| 84 | 16 | 26.2 | 26.7 | 100 |
| Missing System | 1 | 1.6 | | |
| Total | 61 | 98.4 | 100 | |

Two of the limiting concerns expressed in Chapter 1 of this study were the halo effect in which respondents make selections that present them in the best manner or the John Henry effect in which members of two groups inflate their responses in a manner that demonstrates an underlying compensatory rivalry. These effects could influence those willing to complete and return the survey (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 249). Given that 26 (48.3%) of the 60 respondents selected a combination of 6s and 7s, and of these 16 (31.7%) selected all 7s on the principal-principal trust scale, it may be that these effects are indeed actively influencing the results.

With only six responses below the halfway score of 42 of the possible 84 points (28 = 1, 29 = 1, 30 = 1, 33 = 1, 34 = 1, 41 = 1) the number of middle-school principals and high-school principals whose responses indicate a low level of trust draws into question the usefulness of this analysis. One of these was only partially completed, so only five could be analyzed. Further analysis must be taken *cum granum salis*.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the equality of means for those whose responses on the trust survey fell into the category below a 42/84 and

those whose responses rose into the category above a 42/84. The goal was to determine

if there were a significant difference between the implementation of eighth to ninth grade

transition activities and either low or high degrees of trust. Group statistical analysis for

the low-trust group yielded an $n = 5$ ($M = 68.20$, $SD = 16.66$) and the high trust group

was an $n = 55$ ($M = 93.50$, $SD = 25.87$). The table reports the results:

Table 14: Two Independent Samples T-Test for High/Low Trust and Transition
Implementation

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variance | | | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $F$ | $Sig.$ | $T$ | $df$ | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Dif. |
| Q1Q28Summary Equal variances assumed | -2.242 | .140 | -2.138 | 58 | .037 | -25.30909 | 11.83913 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -3.076 | 5.92 | .022 | -25.30909 | 8.22871 |

There is a significant difference between the implementation of the elements of

the transition between principals who indicate a low degree of trust in their counterparts

and those who indicate a high degree of trust; $F = -2.242$, $t$ (58) $= -2.138$, $p < 0.05$. As

trust goes up for the high trust group, the frequency of implementation of transition items

goes up, but as the trust score for the low-trust group goes down, the frequency of

implementation for that group also goes down. A further independent samples t-test was

conducted to compare the distributions of low-and-high trust principals on the first 14

items of the transition survey, which require direct involvement and participation by the

principal, and another independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the

distribution of low-trust and high-trust principals on the second 14 items on the transition

survey (these being conducted by members of the staff other than the principal).

Descriptive statistical analysis for the first fourteen items yielded an $n = 5$ ($M =$

34.2, $SD = 11.79$) for the low-trust principals and an $n = 55$ ($M = 49.83$, $SD = 16.54$) for

the high-trust group. Analysis of the second fourteen items yielded an $n = 5$ ($M = 34.00$,

$SD = 7.106$) for the low-trust principals and an $n = 55$ ($M = 43.67$, $SD = 12.07$) for the

high-trust group. The table presents the results:

Table 15: Two Independent Samples T-Test for High/Low Trust Groups and Transition Items Requiring Direct Principal Action, and T-Test for High/Low Groups and Transition Items with Indirect Principal Action

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variance | | | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1Q14Summary | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Dif. |
| Equal variances assumed | .900 | .347 | -2.059 | 58 | .044 | -15.63636 | 7.59549 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.730 | 5.545 | .037 | -15.63636 | 5.72855 |
| Q15-Q28Summary | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Dif. |
| Equal variances assumed | 2.667 | .108 | -1.756 | 58 | .084 | -9.67273 | 5.50979 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.709 | 6.431 | .033 | -9.67273 | 3.57060 |

There is a significant difference between the low-trust and high-trust groups in

terms of their participation in transition activities that require the direct participation of

the principal (Q1Q14); $F = .900$, $t (58) = -2.059$, $p < 0.05$. Again we see that in high-

trust situations the frequency of implementation increases but in low-trust situations the

frequency of implementation decreases.

There is not a significant difference between the low-trust and high-trust groups

on those elements of a transition process that require the direct action of members of the

community other than the principal (Q15-Q25). Analysis of these results supports the

Pearson product-moment data presented earlier; as trust increases so too does

participation in transition activities. As trust decreases, there is less engagement by the

principal in transition activities. A conclusion can be drawn that high or low trust plays a

role in the comprehensiveness of the eighth to ninth grade transition process.

## Non-parametric testing

According to Pallant (2007), a Chi-square test for independence can be used to

explore a relationship between categorical variables when there are two categories with

two or more variables in each. However, Pallant also recommends that the frequency of representation in any cell of a 2 by 2 table be at least 10 (p. 214). Due to the size of the smallest recoding in this study, in which only five principals were grouped into the low-trust category, the chi-square test was inappropriate. The Kruskal-Wallis, when used in conjunction with the findings of the independent samples t-testing reported earlier, served as a corroborating means of testing the null hypotheses.

When the total number of respondents was divided into those who scored at or below the halfway mark of 42 out of 84 on the principal-to-principal trust scale and those who scored above, only five of the 60 respondents were in the lower category. Given that small sample size, it was appropriate to conduct a non-parametric follow-up analysis. According to Pallant (2007) a non-parametric test does not assume an equal distribution for the underlying population under study. Further, Pallant noted that non-parametric techniques are "useful when you have very small samples" (p. 210). Therefore, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to test the following two null hypotheses: First, "The distribution of Q1Q28 Summary is the same across categories of low, medium, and high trust scores on the principal-to-principal trust scale"; second, "The distribution of Trust Summary is the same across the categories of low, medium, and high trust scores."

There are certain assumptions that must be met in order to conduct a non-parametric test: (a) the samples must be random; (b) each person can only be counted once; and (c) data from one person cannot influence another (Pallant, 2007, p. 211). The Kruskal-Wallis test allows for three or more groups to be compared on a continuous variable. This is a manner of determining a "between groups" analysis (p. 226). Therefore, in order to conduct this test, the principals were recoded into three groups: (a) those who

scored below 42 on the principal-to-principal trust scale (e.g., low), (b) those who scored

between 43 and 76 (e.g., medium), and (c) those who scored above 77 (77-84,) (e.g,

high).

Results of the Kruskal-Wallis test are presented in the table:

Table 16: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Distribution of Transition Items across Low, Medium, and High-Trust Groupings of Principals

| Null Hypothesis | Test | Sig. | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|
| The distribution of Q1Q28 Sum is the same across categories of Low-Medium-High Trust. | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | .024 | Reject the Null Hypothesis |
| The distribution of TrustSum is the same across the categories of Low-Medium-High Trust | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | .000 | Reject the Null Hypothesis |

The significance level is .05.

There is a significant difference among the three groups (low-trust, medium-trust,

and high-trust) in the distribution of implementation on the 28 items in the eighth-to-

ninth grade transition process ($p < 0.05$); there is also a significant difference in the

distribution of trust among the three groups, ($p < .000$). The Kruskal-Wallis test

revealed statistically significant differences in how each group engages in the transition

process. The results would not support any stronger correlational interpretation between

trust and implementation on its own for any of these three groups, but when seen in the

context of the previous analysis via Pearson product-moment correlation and independent

samples t-testing, this confirms the rejection of the first null hypothesis: There is no

relationship between the degree of trust that middle-school principals and high-school

principals invest in each other. It also supports rejection of the second hypothesis: There

is no relationship between the degree of trust middle-school principals and high-school

principals hold for each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition planning. I

turn now to analysis of the eighth-to-ninth-grade transition practices.

**Frequency Distribution of Transition Practices for Items 1 through 14**

A frequency distribution was constructed on the cumulative responses of all 60

principals on the 28 items of the transition survey. The goal was to determine which best

activities were being implemented. The table presents the results. For the sake of clarity,

the data has been divided into two tables: First, items 1 – 14. Note that the total

frequency distribution for each item is also divided into responses by middle-school

principals (MS) and high-school principals (HS).

Table 17: Frequency Interval Distribution for Implementation of Transition Items with Direct Involvement of Principals

| Q1-Q14 Transition Items Involving Principals | Frequency Interval Distribution | | | | | | | Statistics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Level | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | (Inclusive) |
| Q1: Meet to align standards and curriculum | Total | 2 | 22 | 15 | 14 | 3 | 2 | 2 | $M = 3.13$ $SD = 1.334$ $N = 60$ |
| | MS | 2 | 12 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | |
| | HS | 0 | 10 | 9 | 12 | 2 | 1 | 0 | |
| Q2: Collaborate to promote skills and attitudes | Total | 6 | 16 | 18 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 1 | $M = 3.13$ $SD = 1.42$ $N = 60$ |
| | MS | 4 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| | HS | 2 | 9 | 10 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 0 | |
| Q3: Work together to oversee transition | Total | 3 | 9 | 19 | 15 | 5 | 2 | 7 | $M = 3.73$ $SD = 1.614$ $N = 60$ |
| | MS | 1 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 4 | |
| | HS | 2 | 3 | 11 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 3 | |
| Q4: Coordinate communication about parental involvement in transition to high school | Total | 6 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 5 | 3 | 4 | $M = 3.37$ $SD = 1.628$ $N = 59$ |
| | MS | 4 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 3 | |
| | HS | 2 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 1 | |
| Q5: Appoint a transition coordinator* | Total | 28 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 17 | $M = 3.54$ $SD = 2.693$ $N = 59$ |
| | MS | 15 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 6 | |
| *Directions: If this is a permanent position in your school, please mark (7) "Always." If it is not a position in your school, please mark (1) "Never." | HS | 13 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 11 | |
| Q6: Participate in a panel discussion | Total | 19 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 22 | $M = 4.19$ $SD = 2.66$ |
| | MS | 13 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 7 | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | HS | 6 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 15 | N = 59 |
| Q7: Serve on a planning team to oversee transition | Total | 13 | 16 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 10 | M = 3.39 |
| | MS | 7 | 10 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 | SD = 2.15 |
| | HS | 6 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 6 | N = 59 |
| Q8: Coordinate counselor meetings | Total | 4 | 3 | 7 | 13 | 1 | 4 | 27 | M = 5.1 |
| | MS | 2 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 10 | SD = |
| | HS | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 17 | 2.049 N = 59 |
| Q9: Arrange for department chairs to visit middle school | Total | 12 | 5 | 4 | 10 | 3 | 6 | 19 | M = 4.37 |
| | MS | 5 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 8 | SD = |
| | HS | 7 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 11 | 2.355 N = 59 |
| Q10: Organize a "teacher swap" day | Total | 49 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | M = 1.37 |
| | MS | 26 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | SD = |
| | HS | 23 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0.956 N = 60 |
| Q11: Meet to share data about rising freshmen | Total | 16 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 4 | 3 | 7 | M = 3.27 |
| | MS | 7 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 5 | SD = |
| | HS | 9 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2.007 N = 59 |
| Q12: Participate in celebration activities | Total | 12 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 24 | M = 4.5 |
| | MS | 9 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 12 | SD = |
| | HS | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 12 | 2.418 N = 60 |
| Q13: Jointly schedule professional development for middle-school and high-school teachers | Total | 12 | 14 | 23 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | M = 2.69 |
| | MS | 8 | 8 | 12 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | SD = 1.38 |
| | HS | 4 | 6 | 11 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | N = 59 |
| Q14: Work together throughout the year on the transition as a multi-activity process | Total | 14 | 10 | 13 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 6 | M = 3.23 |
| | MS | 8 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 4 | SD = |
| | HS | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1.908 N = 60 |

When direct principal involvement is required, the transition practice with the greatest mean score is Item 8, Coordinate counselor meetings, ($M = 5.5$, $SD = 2.049$, and $N = 59$). The second largest mean score was for Item 12, Participate in celebration activities, ($M = 4.5$, $SD = 2.418$, and $N = 60$). The third largest mean score was for Item 9, Arrange for department chairs to visit middle school, ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 2.355$, and $N = 59$). The fourth largest mean score was for Item 6, Participate in a panel discussion, ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 2.66$, and $N = 59$). The fifth largest mean score was for Item 3, Work together

to oversee transition, ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.614$, and $N = 60$). The sixth largest mean score was for Item 5, Appoint a transition coordinator, ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 2.693$, and $N = 59$). The seventh largest mean score was for Item 7, Serve on a planning team to oversee transition, ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 2.15$, and $N = 59$). The eighth largest mean score was for Item 4, Coordinate communication about parental involvement in transition to high school, ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.628$, and $N = 59$). The ninth largest mean score was for Item 11, Meet to share data about rising freshmen, ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 2.007$, and $N = 59$). The tenth largest mean score was for Item 14, Work together throughout the year on the transition as a multi-activity process, ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.908$, and $N = 60$). The eleventh largest mean score was for Item 1, Meet to align standards and curriculum, ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.334$, and $N = 60$). The twelfth largest mean score was for Item 2, Collaborate to promote skills and attitudes, ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.42$, and $N = 60$). The thirteenth largest mean score was for Item 13, Jointly schedule professional development for middle-school and high-school teachers, ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.908$, and $N = 59$). The fourteenth largest and last mean score was for Item 10, Organize a teacher swap day, ($M = 1.37$, $SD = 0.956$, and $N = 60$).

This instrument was used to determine the perceptions of principals as to the frequency with which their systems employed various representative transition activities, and because it employs a 7-point interval set, the responses are subject to further analysis. By totaling the number of responses at the three highest intervals 5 = Frequently, 6 = Almost Always, and 7 = Always, and setting them against the total of responses for the three lowest levels 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, and 3 = Occasionally, I can determine which of these principal-directed items are most often employed. Responses at the middle interval,

4 = Regularly were not included in order to be able to set the top three levels against the

bottom three levels. The responses for all principals were used because it was previously

established that there was not a significant difference between the two sub-groups of

middle-school principals and high-school principals.

The table presents the 14 transition items (Q1-Q14) in descending order from

most frequently employed to least frequently employed. The range of seven responses

has been redistributed into three categories: High (5) Frequently, (6) Almost Always, and

(7) Always, Middle (4) Regularly, and Low (1) Never, (2) Rarely, and (3) Occasionally.

Table 18: Frequency of Implementation of Principal-Directed Transition Activities
Ranked by Most Frequent (5 + 6 + 7):

| Question (Activity) | Description | Total of 1, 2, & 3 Never, Rarely, & Occasionally | Total of 4 Regularly | Total of 5, 6, & 7 Frequently, Almost Always, & Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q8 | Coordinate counselor meetings | 14 | 13 | 32 |
| Q12 | Participate in celebration activities | 23 | 6 | 31 |
| Q6 | Participate in a panel discussion | 26 | 4 | 29 |
| Q9 | Arrange for department chairs to visit middle school | 21 | 10 | 28 |
| Q5 | Appoint a transition coordinator* *Directions: If this is a permanent position in your school, please mark (7) "Always." If it is not a position in your school, please mark (1) "Never." | 32 | 4 | 23 |
| Q7 | Serve on a planning team to oversee transition | 34 | 7 | 18 |
| Q3 | Work together to oversee transition | 31 | 15 | 14 |
| Q11 | Meet to share data about rising freshmen | 34 | 11 | 14 |
| Q14 | Work together throughout the year on the transition as a multi-activity process | 37 | 9 | 14 |
| Q4 | Coordinate communication about parental involvement in transition | 34 | 13 | 11 |

|  | to high school |  |  |  |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Q2 | Collaborate to promote skills and attitudes | 40 | 9 | 11 |
| Q1 | Meet to align standards and curriculum | 39 | 14 | 7 |
| Q13 | Jointly schedule professional development for middle-school and high-school teachers | 49 | 5 | 5 |
| Q10 | Organize a "teacher swap" day | 57 | 0 | 3 |

The transition activity that was most frequently employed by principals was Item 8, Coordinate counselor meetings, which had the largest total of responses for the three highest categories, (5) Frequently, (6) Almost Always, and (7) Always at 32 with 13 for the middle category, (4) Regularly, and 14 for the total of the lowest three categories, (1) Never, (2) Rarely, and (3) Occasionally. The second highest total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 12, Participate in celebration activities, at 31, with 6 for the middle category and 23 for the lowest three categories. The third largest total of responses for the three highest categories was Item 6, Participate in a panel discussion, at 29 with 4 for the middle category and 26 for the lowest three categories. The fourth largest total of responses for the three highest categories was Item 9, Arrange for department chairs to visit middle school, at 28 with 10 for the middle category and 21 for the three lowest categories. The fifth largest total of responses for the three highest categories was Item 5, Appoint a transition coordinator, at 23 with 4 in the middle category and 32 for the three lowest categories. The sixth largest total of responses for the three highest categories was Item 7, Serve on a planning team to oversee transition, at 18 with 7 for the middle category and 34 for the lowest three categories. The seventh largest total of responses for the three highest categories was Item 3, Work together to oversee transition, at 14 with 15 for the middle category and 31 for the three lowest

categories. The eighth largest total of responses for the three highest categories was Item 11, Meet to share data about rising freshmen, at 14 with 11 for the middle category and 34 for the lowest three categories. The ninth largest total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 14, Work together throughout the year on the transition as a multi-activity process, at 14 with 9 in the middle category and 37 for the lowest three categories. The tenth largest total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 4, Coordinate communication about parental involvement in transition to high school, at 11 with 13 for the middle category and 34 for the lowest three categories. The eleventh largest total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 2, Collaborate to promote skills and attitudes, at 11 with 9 for the middle category and 40 for the lowest three categories. The twelfth largest total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 1, Meet to align standards and curriculum, at 7 with 14 for the middle category and 39 for the lowest three categories. The thirteenth largest total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 13, Jointly schedule professional development for middle-school and high-school teachers, at 5 with 5 in the middle category and 49 for the lowest three categories. The fourteenth and lowest total of responses for the three highest categories was Item 10, Organize a 'teacher swap' day, at 3 with zero in the middle category and 57 in the lowest three categories.

**Frequency Distribution of Transition Practices for Items 15 through 28**

The table presents the frequency distribution for the 14 items (Q15-Q28) that required the indirect leadership of principals, meaning that the activities described would have been delegated or assigned by the principals to other members of the learning community.

Table 19: Frequency Interval Distribution for Implementation of Transition Items with Indirect Involvement by Principals

| Q15 – Q28 Transition Items (Delegated by the Principal(s) to Other People) | Frequency Interval Distribution | | | | | | | | Statistics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Level | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | (Inclusive) |
| Q15: High school students share with middle school students in panel at middle school | Total | 7 | 11 | 12 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 17 | $M = 4.1$ $SD = 2.215$ $N = 60$ |
| | MS | 5 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 10 | |
| | HS | 2 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 7 | |
| Q16: Each rising freshman receives a personalized note from a current freshman | Total | 48 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | $M = 1.33$ $SD = 0.906$ $N = 58$ |
| | MS | 22 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | |
| | HS | 26 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Q17: 8$^{th}$ grade students spend a day at the high school shadowing 9$^{th}$ graders | Total | 23 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 16 | $M = 3.53$ $SD = 2.577$ $N = 58$ |
| | MS | 15 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | |
| | HS | 8 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 12 | |
| Q18: High school clubs and teams hold recruitment fair at middle school | Total | 12 | 5 | 13 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 15 | $M = 3.86$ $SD = 2.236$ $N = 58$ |
| | MS | 7 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 4 | |
| | HS | 5 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 11 | |
| Q19: Current freshmen create a list of tips for rising freshmen (8$^{th}$ graders) | Total | 22 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 9 | $M = 3.03$ $SD = 2.216$ $N = 58$ |
| | MS | 12 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | |
| | HS | 10 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 | |
| Q20: Counselors help parents develop a five year success plan for 7$^{th}$ graders | Total | 37 | 10 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | $M = 1.74$ $SD = 1.332$ $N = 58$ |
| | MS | 20 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | HS | 17 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | |
| Q21: Middle-school and high-school staffs conduct joint transition planning sessions | Total | 13 | 10 | 15 | 10 | 2 | 2 | 6 | $M = 3.14$ $SD = 1.84$ $N = 58$ |
| | MS | 7 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 2 | |
| | HS | 6 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | |
| Q22: A high school exploratory class is offered to 8$^{th}$ graders | Total | 46 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | $M = 1.52$ $SD = 1.246$ $N = 58$ |
| | MS | 21 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | |
| | HS | 25 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | |
| Q23: High-school guidance department orientation held at the middle school | Total | 3 | 2 | 2 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 28 | $M = 5.78$ $SD = 1.851$ $N = 60$ |
| | MS | 2 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 17 | |
| | HS | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 21 | |
| Q24: Collaborative curriculum design team identifies grade 9 objectives | Total | 13 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 2 | 5 | 10 | $M = 3.57$ $SD = 2.128$ $N = 60$ |
| | MS | 6 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 5 | |
| | HS | 7 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 4 | 5 | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q25: Middle-school teachers observe grade 9 classes during visit | Total | 24 | 13 | 16 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 | M = 2.32 |
| | MS | 11 | 7 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | SD = |
| | HS | 13 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1.676 N = 59 |
| Q26: High-school teachers observe grade 8 classes during visit | Total | 36 | 14 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | M = 1.72 |
| | MS | 20 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | SD = 1.25 |
| | HS | 16 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | N = 60 |
| Q27: Middle-school and high-school staffs develop intervention plans for at-risk students | Total | 2 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 4 | 10 | 23 | M = 5.18 |
| | MS | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 13 | SD = |
| | HS | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 1.882 N = 60 |
| Q28: Middle-school and high-school teachers jointly attend professional development on aligning programs | Total | 14 | 16 | 19 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 4 | M = 2.68 |
| | MS | 8 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 3 | SD = 1.55 |
| | HS | 6 | 8 | 12 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | N = 60 |

When the transition activity is organized or conducted by those who have been delegated to perform the task by one or both principals, the item with the greatest mean score is number 23, High-school guidance department orientation held at the middle school, ($M$ = 5.78, $SD$ = 1.851, and $N$ = 60). The second largest mean score was for Item 27, Middle-school and high-school staffs develop intervention plans for at-risk students, ($M$ = 5.18, $SD$ = 1.882, and $N$ = 60). The third largest mean score was for Item 15, High-school students share with middle-school students in panel at middle school, ($M$ = 4.1, $SD$ = 2.215, and $N$ = 60). The fourth largest mean score was for Item 18, High school clubs and teams hold recruitment fair at middle school, ($M$ = 3.86, $SD$ = 2.236, and $N$ = 58). The fifth largest mean score was for Item 24, Collaborative curriculum design team identifies grade 9 objectives, ($M$ = 3.57, $SD$ = 2.128, and $N$ = 60). The sixth largest mean score was for Item 17, 8th grade students spend a day at the high school shadowing 9th graders, ($M$ = 3.53, $SD$ = 2.577, and $N$ = 58). The seventh largest mean score was for Item 21, Middle-school and high-school staffs conduct joint transition planning sessions, ($M$ = 3.14, $SD$ = 1.84, and $N$ = 58). The eighth largest mean score was for Item 19,

| 15 | High school students share with middle school students in panel at middle school | 30 | 7 | 23 |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 17 | 8th grade students spend a day at the high school shadowing 9th graders | 32 | 3 | 23 |
| 18 | High school clubs and teams hold recruitment fair at middle school | 30 | 9 | 19 |
| 24 | Collaborative curriculum design team identifies grade 9 objectives | 32 | 11 | 17 |
| 19 | Current freshmen create a list of tips for rising freshmen (8th graders) | 39 | 5 | 14 |
| 21 | Middle-school and high-school staffs conduct joint transition planning sessions | 38 | 10 | 10 |
| 28 | Middle-school and high-school teachers jointly attend professional development on aligning programs | 49 | 5 | 8 |
| 25 | Middle-school teachers observe grade 9 classes during visit | 53 | 1 | 5 |
| 22 | A high school exploratory class is offered to 8th graders | 53 | 3 | 2 |
| 26 | High-school teachers observe grade 8 classes during visit | 57 | 1 | 2 |
| 20 | Counselors help parents develop a five year success plan for 7th graders | 54 | 1 | 3 |
| 16 | Each rising freshman receives a personalized note from a current freshman | 55 | 2 | 1 |

The transition activity that was most frequently overseen by members of the school community other than the principals was Item 27, Middle-school and high-school staffs develop intervention plans for at-risk students, which had the largest total of responses for the three highest categories, (5) Frequently, (6) Almost Always, and (7) Always at 37 with 9 for the middle category, (4) Regularly, and 14 for the total of the lowest three categories, (1) Never, (2) Rarely, and (3) Occasionally. The second largest

total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 23, High-school guidance department orientation held at the middle school, at 33 with 10 for the middle category and 7 for the lowest three categories. The third largest total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 15, High-school students share with middle-school students in panel at middle school, at 23 with 7 for the middle category and 30 for the lowest three categories. The fourth largest total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 17, 8th grade students spend a day at the high school shadowing 9th graders, at 23 with 3 for the middle category and 32 for the lowest three categories. The fifth largest total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 18, High school clubs and teams hold recruitment fair at middle school, at 19 with 9 for the middle category and 30 for the lowest three categories. The sixth largest total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 24, Collaborative curriculum design team identifies grade 9 objectives, at 17 with 11 for the middle category and 32 for the lowest three categories. The seventh largest total of responses for the highest three categories was Item 19, Current freshmen create a list of tips for rising freshmen (8th graders), at 14 with 5 for the middle category and 39 for the lowest three categories. The eighth largest total for the highest three categories was Item 21, Middle-school and high-school staffs conduct joint transition planning sessions, at 10 with 10 in the middle category and 38 for the lowest three categories. The ninth largest total for the three highest categories was Item 28, Middle-school and high-school teachers jointly attend professional development on aligning programs, at 8 with 5 for the middle category and 49 for the lowest three categories. The tenth largest total for the three highest categories was Item 25, Middle-school teachers observe grade 9 classes during visit, at 5 with 1 for the middle category

and 53 for the lowest three categories. The eleventh largest total for the three highest categories was Item 22, A high school exploratory class is offered to 8th graders, at 2 with 3 for the middle category and 53 for the lowest three categories. The twelfth largest total for the three highest categories is Item 20, Counselors help parents develop a five-year success plan for 7th graders, at 3 with 1 in the middle category and 54 for the lowest three categories. The thirteenth largest total for the three highest categories is Item 26, High-school teachers observe grade 8 classes during visit, at 2 with 1 in the middle and 57 for the lowest three categories. The fourteenth largest total for the three highest categories is Item 16, Each rising freshman receives a personalized note from a current freshman, at 1 with 2 for the middle category and 55 for the lowest three categories.

## Conclusion

Based on these tests, it is reasonable to conclude that there is a relationship between the degrees of trust that middle-school principals and high-school principals invest in each other, and that such trust is, in most cases, positive and significant. Further, it is reasonable to conclude that there is a relationship between the degree of trust shared by these two groups of principals and the comprehensiveness of their transition programming. In the presence of the reported perception of a higher degree of trust one finds a correlative perception of a higher frequency of implementation of transition. As was mentioned earlier, a relationship study of this nature can serve as a pathfinder for more complex associational subsequent research (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 200).

**Chapter V**

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**The Importance of Middle School to High School Transition Programming**

There is a clear positive relationship between success in the freshman year and the likelihood that a student will graduate on time from high school (Horwitz & Snipes, 2008; Reyes, Gillock, Kobus & Sanchez, 2000). Various researchers whose work was edited and presented by Kennelly and Monrad (2009) painted a dire picture of American education; most high school dropouts fail at least 25% of their ninth-grade courses (Letgers & Kerr, 2001, as cited by Kennelly & Monrad, 2009, p. 3). Even more sobering is the stunning number of students who fail to enter their sophomore year of high school. For instance, in 2003-2004 there were 4.19 million freshmen, but this number dwindled to only 3.75 million sophomores in the 2004-2005 school year. Simply put, students will struggle in high school if they arrive academically unprepared (Horwitz & Snipes, 2008, p. 2). Case (2006) referred to the freshman year of high school as "the leak of the bulging pipe" (p. 150).

A successful freshman year can be made more likely for students if the leaders of a school system design and implement a transition plan that addresses each student's academic, social, and emotional needs (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Cohen & Smerdon, 2009). Fonts (1998) determined that principals at both school levels knew what they should be doing, but they did not do these things (p. 178). What principals say they believe and what they do are not always the same thing.

As Weick (1995) pointed out in *Sensemaking in Organizations*, "theories-of-action" are formal statements reflecting the general principles that leaders of an

organization develop to express how they intend to translate their beliefs into actions. However, what people actually do in their day-to-day lives, which Weick called their "theories-of-use," can be wildly discordant with their stated principles. He noted that "[m]eanings tend to stabilize locally, which should be evident from the enormous effort required to create cross-functional teams whose members share even a modest number of meanings" (p. 113). It follows that the alignment between transition practices that are actually implemented in a comprehensive manner and the stated beliefs of a school can be interpreted as an indicator of the wellness of the school as an organization, an indicator of its fidelity to its mission, and to the success of its students.

Stacey (2001) applied chaos theory to organizational dynamics in the development of his proposition that organizations such as school systems are Complex Reponsive Processes, meaning that the identity of any organization is constantly emerging from the dynamic interactivity of its members. His theory is too complex to capture in a few words, but one distinct implication for the leaders of different units within an organization is that all meaning exists in the living moment as individuals engage in collaborative discursive practice, that is, dialogue:

> From the perspective being suggested here, knowledge is always a process, and a relational one at that, which cannot therefore be located simply in an individual head, to be extracted and shared as an organizational asset. Knowledge is the act of conversing, and learning occurs when ways of talking and therefore patterns of relationships change. Knowledge in this sense cannot be stored and attempts to store it in artifacts of some kind will capture only its more trivial aspects. Organizational policies that disrupt relational patterns between people, however,

could seriously damage its knowledge-generating capacity. The knowledge assets of an organization, then, lie in the pattern of relationships between its members and are destroyed when those relational patterns are destroyed. (p. 98)

Leadership could be the enactment of conversation that includes all the members of an organization. If this were the case, then boundary-spanning leadership would be about including people from both middle school and high school in the conversation (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004, p. 22-23).

## Answers to Research Questions

### Question 1

1. What is the relationship between the degrees of trust that middle-school principals and high-school principals invest in each other?

Descriptive statistics for the two groups determined the sample mean for the middle-school principals' degree of trust in their high-school counterparts was $M = 71$, $SD = 17.86$, and $n = 30$, and the sample mean for the high-school principals' degree of trust in their middle-school counterparts was $M = 67.93$, $SD = 16.78$, and $n = 30$. A Pearson product-moment correlation for the degree of trust that each group invests in the other is statistically significant ($r = .658$, $n = 30$, and $p < .01$). The relationship between the trust invested by middle-school principals in their high-school principal partners, and high-school principals in their middle-school partners is medium-to-large (e.g., $> 0.5$ but $< 0.8$) (Pallant, 2007, p. 208).

This is a good starting point for understanding the human resource challenges for the leaders of school districts who seek to align their middle schools and high schools, but more work needs to be done. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1999) define trust as

making oneself vulnerable to others, if those others act with benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty and openness (p. 189). Trust is a necessary aspect of strong relationships within a distributed leadership network, but it is not in and of itself sufficient to lead to the right actions being consistently undertaken. Fonts (1998) concluded that principals knew what they should be doing, but did not do those things (p. 178).

Perhaps more importantly, the findings of my study could raise concerns in those schools where at least one principal perceives a lack of trust in his or her relationship with his or her counterpart. Lack of trust within this sample was associated with a lack of participation in those aspects of transition that required principal leadership. There was a moderate, positive relationship between trust and transition for all principals ($r = .438$, $p < 0.01$), but an independent samples t-test for low-trust and high-trust re-coding of principals yielded a significant difference among the groups [$F = .900$, $t (58) = -2.059$, $p < 0.05$]. One possible consequence could be limited engagement in the transition process between the school led by a low-trust principal and his or her partner's school. This could lead to lower student achievement in the freshman year. Research into low-income urban transitions determined that the less successful the transition to high school is the less likely a student will be to have a successful freshman year; this can have a negative effect on the likelihood that a student will graduate from high school (Reyes, Gillock, Kobus, & Sanchez, 2000).

Callan (2009) chronicled her own district's difficulties with the middle-school-to-high-school transition. Callan had participated in her district's Comprehensive School Reform Leadership Team (CSRLT). She lamented the end of that committee's work, "It

was apparent to me as the [middle-school] principal involved in this effort that when the high-school principal withdrew from the CSRLT, the change efforts at the high school ceased" (p. 115). Similarly, Case (2006) wrote about ninth grade as "the major leak in the educational pipeline" (p. ii), and called for improved alignment between middle-school and high-school philosophies as an essential part of the solution (p. 147). Case compared the transition experience of students in both a suburban and a rural setting. The students at the rural school experienced an atypical increase in performance during their freshman year of high school, and Case attributed this in part to the unusual role played by the principal who spent the mornings at the middle school and the afternoon at the high school as principal of both schools (p. 148). Case called for systematic changes in leadership as well as improvement in instruction and effective transition planning. In effect, the principal in this study was an effective boundary spanner because he was a member of both communities of practice.

Principals who want to develop comprehensive transition programs should spend the time it takes for them to develop meaningful trusting relationships with their counterparts. Gilson (2008) determined that on average only 13.3% of a principal's time was spent on collaborative leadership. If trust is to grow between two principals, to Lewicki and Bunkers (1996) highest level, "Identification-based trust" (p. 122), then principals who are operating at the "knowledge-based trust" level must reallocate their time and engage in meaningful dialogue with each other. William Isaacs (2009), co-director with Peter Senge of the Center for Organizational Learning at MIT, has researched the power of dialogue for two decades (http://www.dialogos.com/aboutus/bill.html). He speaks of the need to develop

organizations into "safe containers" in which people can honestly speak with each other (p. 25). Isaacs explained, "[t]he central purpose is simply to establish a field of genuine meeting and inquiry (which we call a container) -- a setting in which people can allow a free flow of meaning and vigorous exploration of the collective background of their thought, their personal predispositions, the nature of their shared attention, and the rigid features of their individual and collective assumptions" (p. 25).

Dialogue will allow principals to establish a relationship that can benefit students' transition (Shaw, 2002, p. 161), and from this principals will be able to play the role of "boundary spanners" (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). This was addressed by Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) in their advocacy for establishing Communities of Practice to which many members of an organization can belong as a means of overcoming the negative connotations of boundaries (p. 153). Trust emerges in school when professionals make themselves vulnerable to each other and are treated with benevolence by others who are reliable, competent, honest, and open (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1999, p. 189). Because most principals reported a moderate-to-high degree of trust in each other ($r$ = .658, $n$ = 60), one might reasonably conclude that the risk (vulnerability) is not very great. This should empower principals to make the time to develop their relationships. By doing so they can form a Community of Practice (domain of knowledge, community of people, and set of practices), which can redefine the middle-school and the high-school leadership team within a single constellation (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, pp. 22, 27-29, 150). The authors underscored the superior value of collegial relationships between peers as opposed to designated reporting relationships within a hierarchy (p. 20).

**Question 2**

2. What is the relationship between the degree of trust middle-school principals and high-school principals hold for each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition planning?

As was presented in Chapter IV, an increase in the degree of trust shared by these principals is associated with an increase in their perceptions of the comprehensiveness of their schools' transition programming. Although this is a basic association and not a causal connection, it is simply common sense to believe that leaders of school districts should promote trusting relationships among the district's principals, taking what steps are necessary to advance them to Lewicki and Bunker's (1996) highest stage of trust, "Identification-based trust." This is a relationship in which parties "effectively understand and appreciate the other's wants; this mutual understanding is developed to the point that each can effectively act for the other" (p. 122). One of the fruits of such trust can be co-planning and shared responsibility (Heenan & Bennis, 1999) that leads to more successful transition programming.

Of greater concern is how lack of trust affects a school system's leadership dynamics. When the 60 principals who responded to the survey were divided into the five who stated a low-degree of trust and the 55 who expressed a moderate to high degree of trust, statistical analysis for the low-trust group yielded an $n = 5$ ($M = 68.20, SD = 16.66$) and the high-trust group was an $n = 55$ ($M = 93.50, SD = 25.87$). The independent samples $t$-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of how comprehensive their perception of their transition programming was [$F = -2.242, t\,(58) = -2.138, p < 0.05$].

This difference was most observable in the transition items that required their direct action. Descriptive statistical analysis for the first fourteen items yielded an $n = 5$ ($M = 34.2, SD = 11.79$) for the low-trust principals and an $n = 55$ ($M = 49.83, SD = 16.54$) for the high-trust group. (Q1Q14); $F = .900, t (58) = -2.059, p < 0.05$. In low-trust situations the frequency of implementation decreases.

Analysis of those transition practices that require direct involvement of principals reveals that those most frequently reported can be accomplished by principals either on their own, from within their schools, or by attending an event organized by someone else. For instance, the three highest mean scores were for the following activities: First, Coordinate counselor meetings ($M = 5.5, SD = 2.049, n = 59$). Principals can accomplish this by authorizing counselors to get together. Second, Participate in celebration activities ($M = 4.5, SD = 2.418, n = 60$). This is an example of an activity to which the principal simply has to be present as a participant. Third, Arrange for department chairs to visit middle schools ($M = 4.37, SD = 2.355, n = 59$). Here again is delegation, which a principal can accomplish by making a phone call or sending an email.

Contrast these with the three least often employed transition elements: Collaborate to promote skills and attitudes ($M = 3.13, SD = 1.42, n = 60$). This would require both principals spending time together, discussing their mutual charges, working on what Heifitz and Linski (2002) would call "adaptive leadership." Next, Jointly schedule professional development for middle-school and high-school teachers ($M = 2.69, SD = 1.908, n = 59$). Here again, the working relationship between the two principals would have to be mature in order for this complex planning to take place. They would have to be willing to share resources, align calendars, release staff, and share

a common vision. Finally, the least frequently implemented transition activity that was reported in this research was Organize a teacher swap day $(M = 1.37, SD = 0.956, n = 60)$. Conceive of how thoroughly the two school levels would have to be integrated in order for this exchange to take place. In addition to trust being an essential component, the logistics and mutual commitment would have to be enormous. During such a day, teachers from both schools would write lesson plans to be taught by their counterparts, and then teachers would leave the comfort of their own grade level and classrooms in order to go to another building and teach their counterpart's lessons. Forty-Nine of the respondents marked this as a 1, the lowest rating on the 7-point scale. Six marked it as 2, and two marked it at 3. Only one middle school principal and two high school principals gave this activity a 5. No one selected 6 or 7.

The efficacy of an approach to leadership that distributes authority and responsibility might be seen in the moderate to small relationship between the principal-to-principal trust scale and the elements of transition that are overseen by other members of the school community $(r = 0.314, p < 0.05)$. This could be interpreted as a good sign that leadership needn't reside entirely in the principal's office. When the high school guidance department orients rising ninth graders at a meeting held at the middle school $(M = 5.78, SD = 1.851, n = 60)$, or when intervention plans are developed by members of both staffs for at-risk students $(M = 5.18, SD = 1.882, n = 60)$, or when a panel discussion is held at which high-school students describe their experiences to middle-school students $(M = 4.1, SD = 2.215, n = 60)$, then this may be a sign of how an entire community collaborates.

If this is the case, then the role of the principal as a boundary spanner who practices distributed leadership emerges as a necessary component of success. As Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) concluded, the influence of the principal ranks second among school-related factors after teaching in its impact on student learning. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1999, 2000) determined that the principal holds the key to successful collaboration among his or her constituents, especially in how he or she is perceived, in the degree to which the principal is worthy of trust – only the authenticity of the principal's behavior makes a significant independent contribution to the trust his or her staff places in him or her (Beta = 0.828, $p < 0.01$) (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, p. 10).

The answer to the second research question is that there is indeed a relationship between the degree of trust that principals at middle and high school hold for each other and the comprehensiveness of their transition planning.

If a principal accepts the value of developing an identification-based trusting relationship with his or her counterpart, and wants to improve the transition programming for the middle-school to high-school transition, then the frequency distributions in this dissertation might be a good place to start the planning. Those who have relatively weak transition programs should start with the most frequently cited activities.

Principals who are looking to initiate programs might consider engaging in any of the following most-frequently reported activities: (a) Coordinating meetings between counselors, (b) Participating in celebrations of the transition from middle school to high school, (c) Participating in a panel discussion with other key players for an audience of eighth graders and their parents, (d) Arranging for department chairs from the high school

to visit the middle school, and (e) Appointing a transition coordinator who can absorb the technical aspects of the transition work leaving the principal with time to invest in his or her relationship with the other principal.

Conversely, principals who enjoy strong, positive, and trusting relationships with their peers in other schools might want to increase the comprehensiveness of their transition programming by engaging in the least frequently reported practices that are nevertheless recommended as valuable (see Appendix B). The least frequently reported activities on the transition survey are not necessarily the least valuable. They might require greater investment of time, or be the fruit of strong, trusting relationships. For instance, principals might collaborate to establish teacher swap days, jointly scheduled professional development for middle-school teachers and high-school teachers, or they might want to spend the strategic planning time required to align standards and curriculum in a vertical structure, or to collaborate in ways to promote student skills and attitudes toward schools. Another collaborative task could be when principals at both levels (5) communicate in coordinated correspondence with parents about their role in the transition process.

The preceding paragraphs mention only 10 of the 28 items analyzed in this chapter. These 28 items are only a partial list of the full 57 items listed in Appendix B. Principals who are ready to develop the most comprehensive transition programs should work collaboratively to implement more of Appendix B. In this appendix I grouped recommended activities according to Akos and Galassi's (2004) division of rising freshmen's concerns into academic, social, and procedural fears. Based on the

perceptions of the middle-school principal and the high-school principal, the appendix can be consulted for seven variations of recommended transition activities.

A more daring recommendation came from Case (2006) who proposed looping teachers and counselors between the middle school and high school by allowing teams to rotate from the former to the latter with their students (p. 149). Case also posed this question: "What would happen if administrative teams from middle school and high school split their time between schools?" (p. 150).

## Implications for Practical Application

If the leaders of school districts acknowledge the importance of the middle-school to high-school transition process, and seek to promote a comprehensive series of activities that will increase the likelihood that freshmen will have their academic, social, and procedural concerns allayed, and thereby experience a more successful freshman year, then they should invest the time and commitment to ensure that principals trust each other. This can only be achieved if the two people in these positions are allowed to build their relationships. If the leadership teams of school districts wish to experience virtuous loose-coupling between their middle and high schools, in which collaboration and innovation are nurtured, then they should pursue collaborative, distributed leadership structures that take as a primary objective goal the development of their human resources, that is, the people who serve as principals, into trusting colleagues (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). A good place to turn for specifics is James Spillane's website www.distributedleadership.com. As a true Community of Practice, members of an effective school system would be knowledgeable about their domain, their sense of

communal identity, and the skills or knowledge that constitute their practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

## Implications for Theoretical Inquiry

Educators tend to think of schools in a fairly mechanical and hierarchical manner. We often use the metaphor of a machine to attempt to describe how all of the parts fit together. Wheatley (1994) enjoined us to abandon this Newtonian metaphor and apply chaos theory, what she called the new science, to our understanding of organizational behavior.

It is this call that should be answered. Morrison (2002) identified the same need: "What is needed, perhaps, is a paradigm shift to countenance new forms for schools in an emerging new world. Such a move places a heavy responsibility on leadership; the leaders of the schools are in the vanguard of changing schools to become complex adaptive systems or complex responsive processes" (p. 27). A good place to start might be the work of Ralph D. Stacey (2001) *Complex Responsive Processes in Organizations: Learning and Knowledge Creation.*

## Recommendations for Future Research

#1. For those interested in the eighth-grade to ninth-grade transition, a study might be conducted on how a school might use social networking sites or other digital communication to build community and identity between rising ninth-graders and their future high-school community.

#2. Appendix B of this dissertation presents 57 individual transition activities, but only 28 were used in the fieldwork. Further inquiry is warranted into what is the smallest

number of activities that could be designed to meet the rising freshmen's academic, social, and procedural concerns.

#3.  Those interested in organizational dynamics, who truly wish to help our twentieth century school system finally join the twenty-first century, may want to pursue an understanding of a school system as a complex responsive process  (Morrison, 2002; Stacey, 2001).

**Final Word**

As philosopher Annette Baier wrote (1986), "Trust is easier to maintain than to get started and never hard to destroy" (p. 242).   W.K. Hoy's 35 years of research into the role that attitudes, particularly trust and optimism, play in successful school communities, along with his partnership with Tschannen-Moran (1999, 2000) and Tschannen-Moran's (2001) work established the power of trust in principal-teacher, teacher-student, school-family, and teacher-teacher relationships.  Their research correlates with similar work by Bryk and Schneider (2002), who subtitled their book on trust "a core resource for improvement." This research has confirmed what many would suspect:  When principals invest a high degree of trust in each other, their students will enjoy more comprehensive collaboration as evidenced by transition programming.

In an era of accountability, where NCLB, state assessments, international rankings, and the daily discourse of the business world has redefined education, let this study recall us to our roots and best promise for the future, the progressive movement led by John Dewey, committed to experience and democracy.  Dewey (1038) wrote, "The only freedom that is of enduring importance is freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and judgment exercised on behalf of purposes that are

intrinsically worth while" (p. 61). If we are to honor that freedom, we must maintain schools as communities of trust, in which children can safely navigate their way to adulthood.

Appendix A

Categorization by Topic of Dissertation Abstracts from 1983-2009 Found Via Use of the Search Terms:  transition, programs, middle school, and high school

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student needs, Psychosocial | Tomback, Robert M. | Characteristics of classroom contexts, self-processes, engagement, and achievement across the transition from middle school to high school | 2007 | 3260263 | | Connell and Wellborn's model of self-systems | "Connoll and Wellborn's identification of competence, relatedness, and autonomy as three essential psychological needs requiring satisfaction for students' success in the school context were reflected in that almost all of eighth graders' and ninth graders' transition-related concerns could be reliably categorized in accordance with their model." |
| Student needs, Special population | Avalos, Maria Delores | School engagement and high school expectations for the transition to high school | 2005 | 3143366 | | | "The findings of this study suggest that using psychosocial variables to determine the marginalization of students is much more useful than using socio-demographic variables |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | such as ethnicity, immigrant status, and parents' educational attainment, or gender." |
| Student needs, Resiliency | Eanes, Karla | What impact does resilience have in a high school transition program in relation to attendance, grades and discipline? | 2005 | 3170590 | Case Study | Henderson and Milstein's resiliency wheel of six protective factors | "This study shows that a positive transition grounded in resilience does have a positive impact in helping students to gain resiliency skills to positively impact high school completion." |
| Student needs, Special population | Little, Teresa Clinton | Transition from middle school to high school: Designing a middle school functional curriculum for students with disabilities | 2003 | 3113337 | Document analysis | | "This study examined the value-based priorities and the predicted likelihood of implementation for 42 elements found in a functional curriculum developed for middle grade students with disabilities." |
| Student needs, Psychosocial | Franke, Todd Michael | Current life tasks and social problem-solving: The transition from middle school to high school | 1992 | 9221910 | | Kelly's personal construct psychology | "The purpose of this study was to examine the individual life tasks of early adolescents and the strategies they implement to accomplish these tasks |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | prior to and following the transition from middle school to high school." |
| Program, Academic | Vives, Juan, Jr. | Impact of a successful middle to high school transition program on high school graduation rates | 2008 | 3348174 | Content analysis of data | | "The researcher made specific recommendations regarding what components could be used in public middle and high schools in New York City to help increase the rate of high school graduation." |
| Program, Academic | Wisdom, Sherrie L. | Predictors of academic success for high school students: The correlation between middle schools Missouri Assessment Program scores and freshman year grade-point average | 2008 | 3339277 | Correlation study stepwise multiple regression analysis and logistics regression | | "Results indicate that educators may benefit from adding middle school MAP Mathematics scores to the portfolio when evaluating strengths and weaknesses relative to academic transition to high school." |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Program, Academics, Personalization | Kmiec, Cheryl Rose | Freshmen academies and the transition to high school: An investigation of stage-fit environment theory | 2007 | 3300756 | Mixed-method case study | Stage-fit environment theory | "Overall, my study suggests that freshman academies may help to personalize the high school experience when initiatives are completely implemented." |
| Program, Academic | Capstick, Carla Dire | The ninth grade transition: Reinventing the start of high school | 2007 | 3278552 | Quasi-experimental | | "Findings of this study indicate that the ninth grade first semester transition program did not have an impact on academic achievement and attendance, but had somewhat of an impact on school engagement." |
| Program, support mechanisms | Mackay, Stuart | Transitions to ninth grade, interventions, and poor academic achievement | 2006 | 3240340 | Interviews | | "Conclusions: Students needed more and better support mechanisms throughout the transition process. Students wanted to graduate from high school but were already frustrated with the system in ninth grade. Eighth grade is probably too late for educators to be thinking about |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | preparing students for high school." |
| Program, Comparison Catholic & Public | Rushton, Thomas J. | Through their eyes: An analysis of male and female students during their transition from middle school to high school | 2006 | 3247308 | Qualitative study with semi-structured interviews | | "A comparison was then made between the transition experiences of these students on a basis of public vs. Catholic and male vs. female." |
| Program, Coherence | McDowell, Josephine | Impact of whole school reform on instructional program coherence in middle schools | 2006 | 3190197 | | | "The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that were indicators of strong program coherence, and whether these factors contributed to school improvement and student achievement." |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Program, Academic, Procedural, Social | Roskosky, John Thomas | Bridging the gap between middle school and high school eighth grade and high school ninth grade: Developing a transition program | 2006 | 3242133 | | | "The vision for this transition program includes time management skills, social skills, study skills, games and physical activities as stress reducers and esteem builders, activities designed to help the student become comfortable in their new surroundings, and career exploration." |
| Program, Teaming | Gray, Cedrick | The effects of interdisciplinary teaming on the preparation of adolescents for high school | 2004 | 3147073 | | | "This study concluded that for the participants and their schools, interdisciplinary teaming was a highly effective way to prepare middle-level students for high school and improve their attitude towards learning." |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Program, Number of Transition Activities | Yates, Brian Campbell | Middle to high school transitions: A study of formal and informal processes | 2003 | 3117740 | Case study qualitative | | "The school system examined in this qualitative study performs at exceptional levels on state assessments. With less than five formal transition activities within the system, the drop-out rate and retention rate among high school students is also exceptionally low, defying a good deal of research claiming nine or more activities to be necessary." |
| Program, Teaming | Daniels, Denice Jane | Ninth-grade interdisciplinary teams: A tool for professional development | 2002 | 3050187 | Ethnographic case study | | "The purpose of this study is to investigate how ninth grade interdisciplinary teams serve as a professional development strategy in promoting teacher involvement in instructional improvement, how topics and content discussed during team meetings and the design and structure |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | of teams support professional development." |
| Program, Math | Rosen, Serena | An analysis of selected factors related to the selection of advanced mathematics in high school | 2002 | 3086360 | Discriminant analysis | | "The purpose of this paper is to determine the relationship between classroom practices as measured by variables from the NELS:88 data at the eighth grade level, and the tendency for students to enroll in advanced mathematics courses through the twelfth grade." |
| Program, Seminar | Norris, Kathleen | The Ninth Grade Seminar: A ninth grade transition program evaluation | 2001 | 3012846 | Matched pairs study | | "A statistically significant difference was shown in the increased number of credits earned by the sample of students from the Class of 2003, who had taken the Ninth Grade Seminar." |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Program, review | Adamczyk, Jill Elizabeth | Personalizing the high school: Meeting the needs of incoming freshmen | 2001 | 3006421 | Descriptive case study | | "The main purpose of the study was to examine three existing ninth grade programs that were designed to assist students with the transition from middle school to high school....The researcher found that all three programs had merit in assisting the ninth grade transitions, but each program needed areas of support." |
| Program, Evaluation | Wall, Lexcine O. Morris | An evaluation of a staff-designed ninth-grade transition program | 2001 | 3028772 | Action-oriented research program | | "The purpose of this study was to evaluate the Ninth Grade Community, a transition program located in a large urban high school." |
| Program, Academy | Connolly, James Freeman | Aiding students in transition: A case study of the Freshman Academy | 2001 | 3026605 | Case study | | "The study found differences between Academy and comparison students on the achievement variable. These differences were minor; however, they |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | could be used to argue that a smaller learning environment helps students transition from smaller middle schools to a large regional high school." |
| Program, Evaluation | Williams, Angeline Pheneece | An assessment of the STEP program: A transition from middle school to high school | 1999 | 9975118 | Descriptive statistics | | "This research study was designed to investigate the impact of the STEP (Strong Transitions Establish Progress) transition program on student failure rates of core courses, student attendance rates, student grade point averages, and the number of discipline referrals of ninth grade students immediately following the transition from middle school to high school." |
| Program, students and school characteristics | Schiller, Kathryn S. | Organizations, individuals and uncertainty: The transition to high school | 1995 | 9542715 | Longitudinal data analysis | | "I am able to show how both schools' characteristics and students' backgrounds affect the transition |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | process." |
| Program, Academic | Rice, Jennifer Ann King | The effects of systemic transitions from middle to high school levels of education on student performance in mathematics and science: A longitudinal education production function analysis | 1995 | 9511946 | Function analysis | | "Analyses in the study provide evidence that the transition has a negative impact on student achievement in math and science, regardless of when students make the transition and whether they change schools across the transition." |
| Perceptions, Students, Parents, & Teachers | Choate, Karen | Student, parent and teacher perceptions of the transition between middle school and high school | 2009 | 3349766 | Quantitative and qualitative data analysis | | "The results showed that there are differences in both positive and negative perceptions associated with this transition from the perspective of the three groups of participants and that these perceptions changed over time." |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceptions, Students, Parents, & Teachers | McGee, Tony Wayne | Mixed-methodology approach to the study of student problems associated with the transition from middle school to high school | 2009 | 3366239 | Mixed-methodology | | "The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of ninth-grade students and their teachers and parents/guardians with regard to the transition from middle school to high school... All three study groups agree that developing a program to effectuate early adjustment by students and parents to this transition will 'pave the way' toward ultimate student success." |
| Perceptions, academic, procedural, & social | Campbell-Wilder, Kristen | Eighth grade transition to high school: Teacher and student perceptions of academic, procedural and social transition issues | 2009 | 3352751 | Multi-site, mixed methods | Akos and Galassi (2004) | "The conceptual framework for this study was based on a study of elementary to middle school transition by Akos and Galassi (2004) which grouped transition issues into three components: academic, procedural and social." |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|----------|--------|-------|------|-------|--------|------------------|------------------------|
| Perceptions, academic, procedural, & social | Anderson, Sharon L. | Ninth grade transition: Best practices for a successful transition to high school | 2008 | 3310725 | Mixed-methodology | | "This study addresses the need for ninth-grade transition best practices from the perspective of students and will review the literature using the three main areas: academic, procedural, and social." |
| Perceptions | Copeland, Cynthia H. | The perceptions of middle and high school transitions as viewed by students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators in Sumter School District Two | 2006 | 3206573 | Qualitative and quantitative case study | | "Data furnished by respondents were analyzed to determine the academic and social perceptions of students, parents, and educators concerning the transition from middle school to high school and, if the current transition programs help students' transition academically and socially from middle school to high school." |
| Perceptions, Teachers | Collins, William Christopher | A comparative analysis of middle school and high school teachers' perceptions of | 2005 | 3205730 | Comparative analysis | | "Middle school teachers in this study reported that students were ready to enter high school while high school teachers |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | schooling | | | | | reported that they were not ready." |
| Perceptions, Academic | Franzak, Judith K. | Struggling middle school readers transition to high school: A study of policy in context | 2003 | 3093041 | Case study | | "English teachers are not accustomed to viewing themselves as policymakers because the tendency has always been to cast policymakers as the other." |
| Perceptions, Students | Cox, Richard William | Freshman performance gap: What motivates freshman (sic) to overcome the performance gap | 2002 | 3021514 | | | "What this study found was that students know the importance of school, see it as a priority, and value working hard, but they do not find school exciting or relevant to their future and lack the motivation to succeed." |
| Perceptions, Special Population | Letrello, Theresa Mary | A study of student attitudes toward school during the transition from middle school to high school | 2002 | 3051812 | Mixed method | Early adolescent development theory | "The results of this study indicate that overall student attitudes toward school were more positive as the students completed ninth grade. Students with learning disabilities and students without learning |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | disabilities demonstrated very few differences with their attitudes toward school." |
| Perceptions, Special Population | Thorne, Nancy Joana | Perceptions of academically at-risk students of an ease-of-transition program from eighth to ninth grade | 2001 | 3010679 | Phenomenological study | Hetzberg's motivation-hygiene theory | "The findings provided insights for the development of a guide to help school officials and other change agents design more effective transition programs." |
| Perceptions, Counselors & Administrators | Claxton, Russell Lee | School counselors' and administrators' perceptions of middle to high school student transition programs | 2001 | 3025269 | | | "The purpose of this study was to identify those activities that promote student success during the transition from middle school to high school." |
| Perceptions, Students | Kirkland, Barry Alan | Factors that impact transition from middle school to high school: A comparative analysis of student perceptions from feeder schools | 2000 | 9966699 | Qualitative research | | "A summary of the overall study revealed that students have common apprehensions regarding transition, some of which included loss of status, anonymity, insecurity, culture shock, curriculum concerns." |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceptions, Students | Van Zoost, Steven David | This is me in grade 9: Transition from a middle school to a high school | 1999 | MQ45382 | Case study | | "In the analysis of data four themes developed about the transition process: students' voices during the transition, unclear roles and responsibilities within the school community, perceptions about the Grade 9 teachers, and shifts in curriculum frameworks." |
| Perceptions, Special Population | Krivacska, James J. | A program to assist special education students in the transition from middle school to a high school educational program | 1984 | 8428722 | | | "The study sought to identify staff perceptions regarding transition programs and then develop a program of activities to assist students in this transition." |
| Perceptions, Special Population | Ried, Lyle Douglas | Year of school transition and its effects on students | 1983 | 8314147 | Cross-sectional survey | | "A cross-sectional survey of 873 5th to 8th grade students was conducted to determine the extent of their drug use." |
| | | | | | | | |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N/A | Cooper, Ned | A case study of one principal's approach to transition from a junior high school to a middle school in an affluent suburban community | 2003 | 3111351 | | Schwann and Spady | "This study found that the principal's leadership limited the success of the change to a middle school." |
| N/A | Strong, Donna Dorough | Making the transition to middle schooling: A case study of experienced science teachers coping with change | 1999 | 9940957 | Qualitative case study | | "The discussion includes meta-assertions and recommendations concerning the leadership and planning process for movement to a middle school philosophy, the most appropriate building structure for meeting needs of science teachers, teachers as curriculum makers, and the nature of middle level professional development for experienced science teachers." |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Leadership | Payne, Deborah Lynn Hindman | Exemplary middle school principals: A qualitative case study | 2001 | 3021514 | Qualitative case study | | "The combined responses of the respondents interviewed in this investigation implied that leader behaviors and beliefs had the potential to contribute to positive organizational change and a shared vision of middle school goals and values." |
| Leadership | Fonts, Victoria Maria | Transitions to ninth grade: A study of practices and trends | 1998 | 9831798 | | | "Survey results indicated that middle school and high school principals did not apply the same groups of transition practices in their schools. Increased communication and articulation of transition practices are necessary among principals. Middle school and high school principals need to jointly plan and articulate a ninth grade transition program. Findings also revealed that principals did not use |

| Category | Author | Title | Year | AAT # | Method | Conceptual Frame | Citation from abstract |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | the transition practices they perceived as important." |
| Leadership | Mills, Geoffrey Ernest | Managing and coping with multiple educational change: A case study and analysis | 1988 | 8911320 | Case Study | | "At the level of the school principal, I have suggested that principals may actually serve as 'advocates of constraint' rather than as 'agents of change' and they 'fine tuned' instructional programs that had stood the test of time." |

## Appendix B

Fifty-Seven Transition Activities Separated to Address Academic, Procedural and Social Concerns of Rising Freshman

**The first set of 11 items is about practices that involve academic, procedural and social aspects of the transition from middle school to high school.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | At the high school, a transition panel of students, teachers, parents, and administrators discusses the transition with 8$^{th}$ graders and their parents/guardians as the audience. |
| 2 | A panel of high-school students visits the middle school to share high school experiences and perceptions of life as a freshman. |
| 3 | Your school holds informational meetings scheduled throughout the year for continuing orientation of parents and guardians. |
| 4 | The middle and high schools coordinate meetings between eighth and ninth grade counselors to share information about rising freshmen. |
| 5 | There are scheduled meetings for high school department chairs and/or students to visit the middle-level school(s) to talk with eighth graders about high school life. |
| 6 | A member of the high school and the middle school(s) faculty is designated as a "transition coordinator." |
| 7 | Academic and social "At-Risk" assessments and benchmarks are used to identify students who need additional intervention as part of their transition to high school. |
| 8 | The high school holds a beginning-of-school orientation, when rising ninth graders get their schedules and have an opportunity to "walk through their day" without upperclassmen present. |
| 9 | Either the middle school or the high school conducts a transition fair, presented in a carnival fashion, during which information about the high school curriculum, club offerings, vocational courses, academics, available electives, and magnet school alternatives are presented to rising ninth graders. |
| 10 | A high school faculty-member is assigned to each entering ninth grader to serve as an advisor/mentor. |
| 11 | Middle-school principals and high-school principals communicate on the articulation of transition plans. |

**The second set of 5 items is about practices that address academic and procedural aspects of the transition from middle school to high school.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 12 | A guidance orientation on academics and freshman year procedures is held at the middle school(s) by high-school counselors. |
| 13 | Information about the curriculum is presented or provided to eighth graders and their families in January of their eighth grade year and again in the fall of their freshman year. |

| 14 | During the fall of freshman year, students and their families are offered an evening orientation at the high school about academics and procedures for navigating the high school. |
| --- | --- |
| 15 | During the fall of freshman year, a special orientation evening is held for rising ninth graders who are the oldest or only member of their family. |
| 16 | Students are offered classes in decision-making. |

**The third set of 4 items is about transitional practices that address both academic and social concerns of rising ninth graders.**

| 17 | Using a "student risk assessment instrument" the middle school(s) conduct an assessment of students who are at risk of academic or social failure. Intervention plans are personalized to the needs of identified students. |
| --- | --- |
| 18 | Parents receive instruction or reading materials about adolescent development. |
| 19 | Middle school and high school teachers receive professional development on the adolescent and ninth grade. |
| 20 | The high school and middle school(s) organize a "teacher-swap day" during which teachers of eighth grade and teachers of ninth grade prepare lesson plans and spend a day teaching in their counterparts' classrooms. |

**The fourth set of 14 items is about transition activities related to academic achievement.**

| 21 | High school faculty members, counselors, and parents/guardians develop a five-year academic plan for seventh graders during their spring semester. |
| --- | --- |
| 22 | High school and middle school representatives regularly schedule meetings to plan, collect, and analyze academic performance assessments. |
| 23 | Panels of high school and middle school teachers in language arts, mathematics, and science collaborate to identify and sequence what students need to know and be able to do in ninth grade courses. |
| 24 | Middle and high schools share data on students who are entering or leaving their schools. |
| 25 | High school and middle school standards and curriculum are aligned. |
| 26 | Counselors meet with students and their families to select academic courses for grade 9. |
| 27 | Middle school teachers visit high school to attend grade nine classes. |
| 28 | High school teachers visit the middle school(s) to attend grade eight classes. |
| 29 | Teachers from middle and high school jointly attend workshops on curriculum planning. |
| 30 | Eighth graders spend a day at the high school and follow a ninth grade schedule. |
| 31 | Teachers discuss grade-nine academic expectations, syllabi, course outlines, and grading policies with eighth graders and/or freshmen. |
| 32 | The school system, K-12, pursues academic literacy initiatives. |
| 33 | First semester freshmen are offered "catch up" courses during the fall. |
| 34 | Freshmen attend study-skills and work habits training sessions. |

**The fifth set of 5 items is about transition activities related to procedures for navigating the high school and social aspects of life as a freshman.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 35 | Rising freshmen and their families are invited to attend an evening presentation on athletics, intramurals, co-curricular clubs and non-sport teams (i.e., mock trial, debate). |
| 36 | Each high school club, team, inclusive of groups that freshmen may join, creates a poster about itself that is displayed at the middle school during the spring of eighth grade. The clubs conduct a recruitment fair in the fall. |
| 37 | A presentation is made by high school students about the procedures for navigating life as a freshman (i.e., using a locker, finding a bathroom, getting a pass, checking out a book from the library, etc.). |
| 38 | Parents and guardians of rising freshman are offered information on the procedures for navigating the high school. (This might be done at an orientation evening or through publications or both.) |
| 39 | Official letters are written by the high-school administrators to rising ninth graders and their families about navigating the high school. |
| 40 | Rising sophomores (ninth graders) write letters to individual eighth grade students that include tips for successfully following procedures as freshmen. |

**The sixth set of five questions is about procedural aspects of navigating the freshman year.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 41 | Both middle and high school administrations conceive of the transition as a process that is completed over time rather than as a simple orientation event. |
| 42 | A "transition team" composed of middle school and high school teachers meets monthly to plan and conduct transition activities throughout the school year. |
| 43 | The high school attendance policy is reviewed with parents of rising freshmen. |
| 44 | Families of eighth graders receive a booklet from the high school that explains the transition plan and addresses procedural issues. |
| 45 | The freshman year is built around team-teaching structures. |

**The seventh set of 13 items is about how transition plans address the social concerns of rising freshmen.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 46 | A summer picnic is held for rising freshmen. |
| 47 | Both middle and high schools encourage parental involvement in schools. |
| 48 | Each student is assigned to a member of the high school faculty who serves as an advisor or mentor. |
| 49 | Freshmen are scheduled into small class sizes in order to promote personalization. |
| 50 | Each eighth grader receives a personalized letter from a ninth grader that addresses the social concerns of being a freshman. |
| 51 | Celebrations signify the end of middle school and the beginning of high school. |

| 52 | A high school exploratory class is offered to eighth graders as an opportunity to look at the connections between high school courses and future careers. |
|----|---|
| 53 | There is a hotline or website available for parents and students to ask questions about the freshman year. |
| 54 | The high school makes a self-made video of a "Day in the Life of a Freshman" available to rising freshmen. |
| 55 | The high school PTSA creates a list of parent ambassadors who are willing to field questions about the high school from parents of middle-school students. |
| 56 | The high school PTSA distributes its own phone book with names of high school students and families. |
| 57 | One lunch period is dedicated to freshmen only. Grades 10, 11, and 12 are mixed up for lunch. |

Appendix C
Letter of Solicitation

**SETON HALL UNIVERSITY.**

Dear Middle School or High School Principal,

I am a doctoral candidate currently enrolled in Seton Hall University's College of Education and Human Services. I am writing to request that you assist me with research I am conducting in relation to my dissertation.

I am interested in understanding the role played by principals in the grade 8 to grade 9 transition process in terms of their leadership in overseeing and directing the transition process. There are two aspects to my project. First, I seek your perceptions of aspects of the transition process that are employed in your school system. Second, I seek perceptions of the relationship between middle school and high school principals, particularly the degree of trust they hold for each other. It is my hope that my research can shed light on how to promote positive and productive relationships between middle school and high school principals and by doing so ease their mutual students' experience of the transition to high school.

I respectfully request that you take ten to fifteen minutes to complete the included survey, "8th to 9th Grade Transition Planning and Leadership." There are three sections to this survey. In the first, there are 14 statements about aspects of the middle school to high school transition process that require the direct oversight of principals. In the second, another 14 statements describe aspects of the transition that are conducted by other members of the middle school or high school's staff. In the third, there are 12 statements about how principals perceive their relationship with their counterpart in the other school.

Your participation in this survey is, of course, entirely voluntary on your part. Allow me to express my gratitude in advance for your time and input.

Anonymity will be assured. The information will not be disaggregated by town or school system. It will not be possible for the feedback of any individual respondent to be connected to him or her in any way.

Data will be secured on a data stick, which will be locked in this researcher's home office for a period of three years. This data will be held in the strictest confidentiality.

With sincere gratitude,

Tom McMorran
Doctoral Candidate, Seton Hall University
Assistant Superintendent & Head of School
Joel Barlow High School, Redding, Connecticut

Appendix D

## 8th to 9th Grade Transition Planning and Leadership

### 1. Message to Middle School Principals and High School Principals

Dear Educational Leaders,

Thank you for providing responses to this survey. Completing this survey should take no more than ten to fifteen minutes. Your responses will be entirely anonymous. Your time and input is much appreciated.

This survey has been designed to collect information from middle school principals and high school principals about the 8th to 9th grade transition process in their current school systems.

**1. Please identify your current employment status. If you are not in one of these positions, please exit from the survey at this time.**

◯ Middle School Principal

◯ High School Principal

### 2. Section 1 of 3

Please read each of the following 14 statements about the actions taken by middle school principals and high school principals as part of the 8th to 9th grade transition process.

Please respond to all statements within the context of your current position as an educational leader within your current school system.

Your responses should indicate the frequency with which you and your counterpart engage in each practice.

**1. The middle school principal and the high school principal meet to align academic standards and curricula.**

◯ Never  ◯ Rarely  ◯ Occasionally  ◯ Regularly  ◯ Frequently  ◯ Almost Always  ◯ Always

**2. The middle school principal and the high school principal collaborate on ways to promote study skills, academic habits, and positive attitudes toward learning among their students.**

◯ Never  ◯ Rarely  ◯ Occasionally  ◯ Regularly  ◯ Frequently  ◯ Almost Always  ◯ Always

**3. The middle school principal and the high school principal work together to oversee the 8th to 9th grade transition.**

◯ Never  ◯ Rarely  ◯ Occasionally  ◯ Regularly  ◯ Frequently  ◯ Almost Always  ◯ Always

## 8th to 9th Grade Transition Planning and Leadership

**4. The middle school principal and the high school principal coordinate their communications about the value of parents' active involvement in their children's transition to high school.**

○ Never ○ Rarely ○ Occasionally ○ Regularly ○ Frequently ○ Almost Always ○ Always

**5. The middle school principal and/or the high school principal appoints a member of the faculty to serve as a "transition coordinator." (If this is a permanent position in your school, please mark "Always." If this is not a position in your school, please mark "Never.")**

○ Never ○ Rarely ○ Occasionally ○ Regularly ○ Frequently ○ Almost Always ○ Always

**6. At least once a year a panel of administrators, including the middle school principal and the high school principal, and/or students, teachers, and high school parents discuss the transition for an audience of 8th graders and their families.**

○ Never ○ Rarely ○ Occasionally ○ Regularly ○ Frequently ○ Almost Always ○ Always

**7. A planning team, including faculty members from the middle school and the high school, including both principals, plans and oversees the implementation of transition activities.**

○ Never ○ Rarely ○ Occasionally ○ Regularly ○ Frequently ○ Almost Always ○ Always

**8. The middle school principal and the high school principal coordinate meetings between the 8th and 9th grade guidance counselors to share information about rising freshmen.**

○ Never ○ Rarely ○ Occasionally ○ Regularly ○ Frequently ○ Almost Always ○ Always

**9. Collaboratively, the middle school principal and the high school principal arrange for high school department chairpersons or their designees to visit the middle school in order to talk with 8th graders about academic expectations in freshman year.**

○ Never ○ Rarely ○ Occasionally ○ Regularly ○ Frequently ○ Almost Always ○ Always

## 8th to 9th Grade Transition Planning and Leadership

**10. The middle school principal and the high school principal coordinate a "teacher swap day" in which teachers of 8th grade and teachers of 9th grade prepare lesson plans and spend a day teaching in each other's classrooms.**

○ Never　○ Rarely　○ Occasionally　○ Regularly　○ Frequently　○ Almost Always　○ Always

**11. The middle school principal and the high school principal meet to share and analyze data about 8th graders who are transitioning to 9th grade.**

○ Never　○ Rarely　○ Occasionally　○ Regularly　○ Frequently　○ Almost Always　○ Always

**12. The middle school principal and the high school principal participate in activities, either together or separately, that celebrate their students exit from 8th grade or entry into 9th grade.**

○ Never　○ Rarely　○ Occasionally　○ Regularly　○ Frequently　○ Almost Always　○ Always

**13. The middle school principal and the high school principal arrange for teachers who work with 8th or 9th grade students to receive professional development about the needs of students during the transition.**

○ Never　○ Rarely　○ Occasionally　○ Regularly　○ Frequently　○ Almost Always　○ Always

**14. The middle school principal and the high school principal work together throughout the year to oversee the implementation of the transition as a multi-activity process.**

○ Never　○ Rarely　○ Occasionally　○ Regularly　○ Frequently　○ Almost Always　○ Always

## 3. Section 2 of 3

Please read the following 14 statements about the transition process and rate them on the scale.

Please respond to all statements within the context of your current school system.

**1. A panel of high school students visits the middle school to share their high school experiences and perceptions of life as freshmen.**

○ Never　○ Rarely　○ Occasionally　○ Regularly　○ Frequently　○ Almost Always　○ Always

## 8th to 9th Grade Transition Planning and Leadership

**2. Each 8th grader receives a personalized note from a 9th grade student that addresses some aspect of being a freshman.**

◯ Never    ◯ Rarely    ◯ Occasionally    ◯ Regularly    ◯ Frequently    ◯ Almost Always    ◯ Always

**3. 8th grade students spend part or all of a day at the high school and follow a 9th grade schedule.**

◯ Never    ◯ Rarely    ◯ Occasionally    ◯ Regularly    ◯ Frequently    ◯ Almost Always    ◯ Always

**4. High school extra-curricular clubs and athletic teams create recruitment posters or handouts that are displayed in the middle school during the spring of 8th grade.**

◯ Never    ◯ Rarely    ◯ Occasionally    ◯ Regularly    ◯ Frequently    ◯ Almost Always    ◯ Always

**5. Members of the freshman class create a list of tips for rising freshmen about how to succeed in 9th grade.**

◯ Never    ◯ Rarely    ◯ Occasionally    ◯ Regularly    ◯ Frequently    ◯ Almost Always    ◯ Always

**6. Middle school and high school counselors and parents/guardians develop a five-year academic plan for 7th graders during their spring semester of seventh grade.**

◯ Never    ◯ Rarely    ◯ Occasionally    ◯ Regularly    ◯ Frequently    ◯ Almost Always    ◯ Always

**7. Middle school and high school staff members conduct joint meetings to plan, collect, and analyze academic performance data for 8th and 9th grade students.**

◯ Never    ◯ Rarely    ◯ Occasionally    ◯ Regularly    ◯ Frequently    ◯ Almost Always    ◯ Always

**8. A high school exploratory class is offered to 8th graders as an opportunity for them to look at the connections between high school courses and their future career possibilities.**

◯ Never    ◯ Rarely    ◯ Occasionally    ◯ Regularly    ◯ Frequently    ◯ Almost Always    ◯ Always

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**9. A guidance department orientation on 9th grade academics and the freshman year is held at the middle school by high school counselors.**

◯ Never ◯ Rarely ◯ Occasionally ◯ Regularly ◯ Frequently ◯ Almost Always ◯ Always

**10. A curriculum design team of middle school and high school teachers work together to identify what students need to know and be able to do in 9th grade courses.**

◯ Never ◯ Rarely ◯ Occasionally ◯ Regularly ◯ Frequently ◯ Almost Always ◯ Always

**11. Middle school teachers of 8th grade students visit the high school in order to observe/sit in on 9th grade classes.**

◯ Never ◯ Rarely ◯ Occasionally ◯ Regularly ◯ Frequently ◯ Almost Always ◯ Always

**12. High school teachers of 9th grade visit the middle school in order to observe/sit in on 8th grade classes.**

◯ Never ◯ Rarely ◯ Occasionally ◯ Regularly ◯ Frequently ◯ Almost Always ◯ Always

**13. The middle school staff identifies students who are at risk of experiencing social or academic difficulties as freshmen and in collaboration with the high school staff develop intervention plans for these students.**

◯ Never ◯ Rarely ◯ Occasionally ◯ Regularly ◯ Frequently ◯ Almost Always ◯ Always

**14. Middle school teachers and high school teachers jointly attend professional development workshops on how to align their programs in order to achieve a successful transition for students.**

◯ Never ◯ Rarely ◯ Occasionally ◯ Regularly ◯ Frequently ◯ Almost Always ◯ Always

## 4. Section 3 of 3

The statements in this section ask you to comment on the nature of your working relationship with your counterpart. As you read each statement, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement as it applies to the other principal in your middle school to high school transition.

As you read each statement, please mentally insert your counterpart principal's name in the blank.

Permission to use the questions in this section of the survey was granted by Dr. Phillip Bromiley. The twelve statements that follow have been found to reliably determine the degree of trust that one member of an organization invests in

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another. All responses will be entirely anonymous.

**1. I feel that _____ takes advantage of me.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

**2. I feel that I can depend on _____ to negotiate honestly with me.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

**3. I feel that I cannot depend on _____ to fulfill his/her commitment to me.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

**4. I think that _____ negotiates agreements fairly.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

**5. I feel that _____ is straight with me.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

**6. I feel that the people in _____'s school succeed by stepping on other people.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

**7. I feel that _____ keeps the spirit of an agreement.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

**8. I feel that _____ will keep his/her word.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

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**9. I think that _____ does not mislead me.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

**10. I think that _____ takes advantage of my weaknesses.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

**11. I think that commitments made to my school will be honored by people in _____'s school.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

**12. I feel that _____ takes advantage of people who are vulnerable.**

○ Strongly Disagree    ○ Disagree    ○ Slightly Disagree    ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ○ Slightly Agree    ○ Agree    ○ Strongly Agree

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