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AT RISK STUDENTS AND RESILIENCY

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A Dissertation

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

_____

by

Mark David Norris

June 2014

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ABSTRACT

Many "at risk" students are successful in middle school and high school, and are college bound, despite the fact that they face numerous factors that place them at-risk for academic failure or for dropping out of school. One of the key factors that makes these students unique and academically successful is resiliency. Resiliency is identified as the ability to recover or adjust easily from misfortune or change. Resiliency might also be defined as an individual's ability to effectively cope with challenges in a stressful environment. However, this definition does not account for those who are, at one point, not able to effectively cope with challenges, but who are able to reverse this cycle over time. This study sought to better understand the nature by which Hispanic students who were previously failing academically were able to reverse that cycle and become academically successful. For the purpose of this study, resiliency is defined as a process in which individuals overcome hardship and adversity to create lives that are meaningful and successful.

What do Hispanic students do that makes them resilient and academically successful after experiencing academic failure? This research study addresses how students move from school related risk to academic resiliency. Many studies explore the qualities of resilient traits, but do not examine how resilient characteristics develop over time and through the interplay of one's social and personal experiences. Often times, it is assumed that academically successful

students have always been resilient, but in many instances, this might not be the case.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, for all the love and support they have shown to me all of my life. Especially, my father, who passed away many years ago, I know this day would make him proud. To my mother, who never gave up on me, and inspired me to be the best I could be. To my children, I think all of you are the greatest gift I have ever received. To my sister, who has always been very supportive. I hope that my work inspires others to fulfill their dreams, no matter what they are. All dreams are possible with dedication, hard work and total commitment to what you are passionate about. I would also like to thank God for giving me the ability and opportunity to make a difference in our world.

Thank You!

Mark Norris

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Teachers encounter various types of students on a daily basis. For example, students who will do everything the teacher asks them to do, and students who will refuse to do any of the assignments the teacher asks them to do. It is important for educators to understand the vital role they play in creating an environment that allows students to transition from academic risk to academic success. Much research has been conducted regarding why at-risk students have a much greater risk of either dropping out of school or failing academically (Ma'ayan, 2010). However, more research is needed in the field of education that unveils how students can transition from risk to resiliency.

Statement of the Problem

There is a higher percentage of English Language Learners, as well as a large percentage of Hispanic/Latino students who have decided to drop out of school. In a study conducted by Silver, Saunders and Zarate (2008), the researchers looked at the various factors that were attributed to high school graduation rates in the Los Angeles Unified School District. English language proficiency has been found to predict dropouts. The researchers investigated the graduation rate of English Learner students. The researchers discovered that only 33% of students who were identified as not mastering the English language

graduated as compared with 58% of students who had successfully tested at the

English proficiency level.

Table 1 presents California graduation and dropout data for 2010/2011.

The state dropout data identifies that the groups at higher risk of dropping out are

Latinos 17.7%, English Learners 24.8%, socio-economically disadvantaged

17.6%, and the statewide average is 14.4% California Department of Education

(CDE, 2010).

Table 1. *California Cohort Data for the Class of 2010-2011.*

Subgroup	Cohort Students (N)	Cohort Graduates (N)	Cohort Graduation Rate	Cohort Dropouts (N)	Cohort Dropout Rate
Statewide	501,663	382,558	76.3	72,314	14.4
Male	256,456	185,513	72.3	43,173	16.8
Female	245,207	197,045	80.4	29,141	11.9
Hispanic/Latino	238,436	167,886	70.4	42,126	17.7
White	146,169	124,863	85.4	12,980	8.9
English Learners	100,117	60,280	60.2	24,858	24.8
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	314,369	219,856	69.9	55,483	17.6

Note. California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, 2010,
retrieved from (http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest).

Additionally, Table 2 presents dropout data from the middle school where this case study was conducted. This middle school specific data demonstrates that students are dropping out as early as middle school. There needs to be more of an emphasis on strategies that will assist schools in promoting an educational environment that will insure that middle school students will want to remain in school and ultimately graduate from high school.

Table 2. *Middle School Data for the Dropouts by Ethnic Designation and Grade 2010-2011, where this study was conducted.*

Ethnic Category	Adjusted Grade 7 Students	Adjusted Grade 8 Students
1. American Indian/Alaska Native/Not Hispanic	0	0
2. Asian/Not Hispanic	0	0
3. Pacific Islander/Not Hispanic	0	0
4. Filipino/ Hispanic or Latino of any Race	2	11
5. African American/ Not Hispanic	1	4
6. White/Not Hispanic	1	1
7. Two or more Races/Not Hispanic	0	0

Note: California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, 2010, retrieved from (http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest).

For many students, their success in middle school is a determining factor as to whether or not they will eventually dropout of school. Success or failure in

middle school has been associated with school completion (Balfanz, Herzog and MacIver, 2007). For many students, the middle school years are where they begin to go down the wrong path, which often leads them to dropping out of school. In a study by Balfanz, Herzog, and MacIver (2007) the researchers reviewed a sample of 12,972 students over an eight year period which started in grade six and went through one year beyond their expected graduation year. They researched a longitudinal data set that encompassed student attendance, demographic information, courses taken, credits earned, and test data. From the data that was gathered during their research, it indicated that students who failed English or mathematics courses had a high likelihood of dropping out. It was found that only 14 percent of sixth grade students who failed mathematics and 19 percent who failed English graduated from high school.

The research conducted by Kurlaender, Reardon, and Jackson (2008) tracked a cohort of middle school students in three different California school districts from grade seven to their graduation year. The researchers found that middle school academic success strongly predicts high school achievement and graduation. "Middle school correlates associated with decreased achievement in high school included grade retention, course failings, grades and test scores, and enrollment in Algebra by 8th grade" (Kurlaender, et al., 2008, p. 1). The scores that participants in this study had on the California Standards Test (CST) in English Language Arts for school calendar years 2011-2012 is shown in Table 3. The CSTs are a major component of the Standardized Testing and Reporting

Program (STAR). The CSTs were developed by California educators and test

developers specifically for California. They measure students' progress toward

achieving California's state-adopted academic content standards in English–

Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and history–social science, which

describe what students should know and be able to do in each grade and subject

tested (www.startests.org).   Table 3 also includes the CST scores range

for grade 7 in English Language Arts in the State of California.

Table 3. *Scores on the California State Test in English Language Arts*.

CST Scores English Language Arts (ELA)	Score Scale
Student Participant 1: 347 Student Participant 2: 350 Student Participant 3: 355 Student Participant 4: 349 Student Participant 5: 323 Student Participant 6: 455	Advanced: 414-600 Proficient: 350-413 Basic: 300-349 Below Basic: 257-299 Far Below Basic: 150-256

All of the student participants in this study were at a basic level or above in

English Language Arts during the 7th grade (www.erusd.edu.k12.ca.us).

Table 1 indicates the cohort data for school calendar year 2011-2012 for

the state of California. During that year, California had a dropout rate of 14.4%

for both male and female students combined. The middle school in this study was far below the average of the state dropout rate. The middle school in this study had a cohort dropout rate of approximately 2.0% during the same school calendar year. The school site had a student population of approximately 1000 students.

The term "adjusted" in Table 2 refers to statistical averages that have been corrected to compensate for any imbalances. Often times, outliers will be removed because they have a large impact on calculating the means or averages of small populations. In this table, these numbers have been altered to bring the data into a proper relation.

Due to what research has uncovered regarding some of the factors that are associated with the dropout problem, this case study explores the specific Latino/Latina and English Learner subgroups within a middle school setting in order to proactively explore this issue in a manner that can transform practice. This study explores the issue from a resiliency perspective rather than from a deficit model, since a deficit model perpetuates the notion that little can be done to address the problem, and or, that it is the student's fault. "Blaming the children's parents, their culture, and their language for their lack of success in school has been a classic strategy used to subordinate and continue to fault the victim" (Flores, Cousin & Diaz, 1991, p.371).

The sections below briefly address the literature on risk and resiliency. They will be further addressed in the literature review.

Defining At-Risk Students

When we identify students who are at-risk for academic failure or for dropping out of school, these identifications are expressions of the likelihood this will occur (Ramney et al., 1982). The term itself (at-risk) is derived from a medical model (Presseisen, 1992). The term "at-risk" implies that there is some sort of a threatening condition that surrounds certain students. Addressing at-risk from a medical perspective allows for interventions, or opportunities for prevention or reductions in threat.

Negative social factors, stress, lack of familial support, lower socioeconomic status, unemployment and communities with high crime rates, can all contribute to student failures, psychological issues, and dropping out of school. However, many children manage to overcome these barriers and become well-adjusted individuals, others do not (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostolny & Pardo, 1992).

A high percentage of these "at-risk" students come from inner city neighborhoods and attend schools where underachievement, teacher alienation and extremely high dropout rates are prevalent (Hodgkinson, 1991). As a result of these conditions, many students are not able to overcome the obstacles that have placed them at-risk for academic failure (Boyd, 1991). Students who are at-risk for academic failure or for dropping out of school are not merely isolated to

inner city schools. They can come from anywhere. At-risk students are defined

as:

1. Students who, for whatever reason, are at-risk of not achieving the goals

   of education, of not meeting local and state standards for high school

   graduation, and not acquiring the knowledge, skills and dispositions to

   become productive members of society;

2. Students whose behaviors interfere with their education, as well as

   students who require disciplinary action, and;

3. Students whose family or community background may place them at-

   risk, for example, children born to teenage mothers. Even when these

   characteristics have been identified, it is often difficult to describe the

   typical at-risk student (McCann & Austin, 1988).

Defining Resilient Students

When we attempt to define resiliency, researchers vary in their definition

of a resilient student. However, we also see that they have similar, as well as

contrasting views as to what it means to be resilient. Table 4 illustrates the

varying definitions of resiliency from these researchers from 1985 to 2008.

For the purpose of this study, "being resilient is a condition in which

individuals overcome hardship and adversity to create lives that are meaningful

and successful" (Van Hook, 2008, p. 3). These researchers go on to say that

children develop resilient behaviors at various points in their lives based on their

Table 4: *Definitions of Resiliency.*

Scholar	Definition
Rutter (1985)	*A person's ability to respond positively to stress and trauma and the ability to bounce back with positive pro-social actions.*
Masten (1990)	*As a process of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.*
Benrad (1991)	*As a set of strengths, qualities, and protective mechanisms that allows for successful adaptation or adjustment despite the fact that there might be numerous factors that place a student at-risk for academic failure.*
Linquanti (1992)	*A child's ability not to succumb to school failure, mental health issues, juvenile delinquency, or substance abuse.*
Peng (1992)	*Breaks resilience into four specific categories, 1. Positive use of time 2. Individual qualities 3.Family factors 4.School factors.*
Joseph (1994)	*A resilient person is self- reliant, positive, responsible, socially skillful and committed.*
Van Hook (2008)	*A process in which individuals overcome hardship to create and sustain lives that are meaningful and successful.*

social interactions, as well as on environmental factors.

When we compare the characteristics that resilient students have in common they include the ability to respond positively to trauma, stress, and hardship that has been placed in their lives. Another common characteristic is being able to adapt to challenging and threatening situations that have been placed in their lives.

Although the researchers agree on certain resilient characteristics, they also disagree on other resilient characteristics or traits, such as the positive use of time, family and school factors. Other resilient factors are being self-reliant, positivity, responsible and socially skillful. Although there is some disagreement

amongst the researchers as to the definition of a resilient student, all of the definitions seem to imply a sense of ownership amongst resilient students that they are responsible for their academic success or lack of success. Benrad (1991) illustrates several characteristics that appear to summarize the varying definitions of what it means to be a resilient student.

Benrad (1991) describes four characteristics that resilient students have in common:

1. social competence (the ability to establish positive relationships both with their peers and with adults);

2. problem-solving skills (planning that enables seeing oneself in control and possess the ability to seek help from others);

3. autonomy (a sense of one's own identity, the ability to act independently, and the ability to exert some control over one's environment);

4. a sense of purpose and future (having clear goals, educational aspirations, persistence, hope and a sense of a bright future).

The research conducted by Peng and Lee (1992) indicates that resilience can be organized into four specific categories: positive use of time, individual qualities, family and school factors.

1. Positive use of time - McMillan and Reed (1992) discovered that resilient students use their time positively and were often involved in school activities, as well as activities outside of school. In addition, participation

in extra-curricular activities and sports promoted self-efficacy and confidence.

2. Individual qualities - These students typically view the world they live in as a positive place, even though they might face numerous obstacles and difficulties. In addition, they typically come to class prepared, participate in class activities, and respect others.

3. Family factors - Typically, these students have a sense of trust and close relationships with their parents or caregivers. In addition, they also were able to develop close and trusting relationships with their peers and teachers (Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, & Skinner, 1991).

4. School factors - Resilient students were found to use their time in a positive manner. They were more involved in school activities, as well as other activities, sports and extra-curricular activities. They tended to have very little free time.

As a result of these activities, students developed confidence, self-esteem and developed a sense of accomplishment (Geary, 1988; Coburn & Nelson, 1989; McMillan and Reed, 1993).

Finally, resilient students exhibited confidence that they could accomplish their goals and they were very hopeful and optimistic about their future. As a result of their undesirable situations, they were reminded how important attaining education was to improving their lives. This ultimately motivated them towards

their goal. Ultimately, all of these characteristics contribute in some manner to a student being academically successful and resilient.

That being said, rather than focus on a deficit model, and research that has not worked to improve academic success this researcher explores what has been working to improve academic success in students and foster resiliency. Once these areas of positive academic strategies have been identified, they can then be replicated in many instances. These strategies most likely could create an atmosphere in education where positive strategies and success is the main focus as opposed to focusing on what has not worked in the past.

Purpose of the Study

This case study is an exploration of at-risk students who moved from academic risk to academic resiliency. The student participants in this study were identified as failing in school by the teachers at the school site in the sixth grade, but turned that around in the seventh grade, and continued to be academically successful and resilient in the eighth grade. The student participants who were identified in this study were failing two or more classes, had poor attendance, behavioral issues, exhibited poor social skills with adults and peers, and had average grades of C or lower from the first to the sixth grade (Appendix G & H). Although previous studies have explored risk factors and proactive factors that mediate these risks, there is still need for further understanding of how different children move or transition from at-risk school related behaviors to resilient

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school related behaviors. What contributes to a student being at-risk from a home, school, or community? What from these perspectives can contribute to some of these same student participants becoming academically resilient?

Significance of the Study

Most research on at-risk students and resiliency focuses on what has not been successful in educating the youth of our society. In other words, it focuses on a deficit model, rather than looking at what works for those students who exhibit high levels of resiliency. Researchers are clearly able to identify the key indicators for academic failure. In addition, researchers are also able to identify specific characteristics of students who are resilient.

Research Questions

1. What are the key characteristics that enable some middle school students to overcome numerous "at risk" factors and become academically successful immediately following academic failure?
2. What did these student participants do in the classroom on a daily basis that directly contributed to their academic success and their resiliency?
3. What are the strategies that schools use to foster resiliency specifically for students who have been able to move from academic failure to academic success during middle school?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this case study uses Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). Within this theory, the individual is viewed as developing within a complex system of relationships. These relationships are affected in turn by the environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory suggests that one's development reflects and is responsive to the influence of several environmental systems. The structure of the environment is broken down into 5 systems:

1. Microsystem - The structures in the microsystem include the school, community and the family environments. It also encompasses the interactions and the relationships that children have with their surroundings (Berk, 2000).

1. Mesosystem - This is the system of connections between the structures of the child's microsystem (Berk, 2000). An example would be, the connection children have between their teachers and parents, as well as between their church and neighborhood.

2. Exosystem - This system refers to the larger social system. Although children might not be directly involved in it, they could be effected by it. An example would be their parent's work schedules. They feel the effects of this system either directly or indirectly.

3. Macrosystem - This system involves the values, customs and laws within their community.

4. Chronosystem - This system involves the dimension of time. As children get older, they will most likely react differently to environmental influences or changes. They are better able to determine how these changes will effect and influence them.

Figure 1 indicates Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and how each system influences the individual.
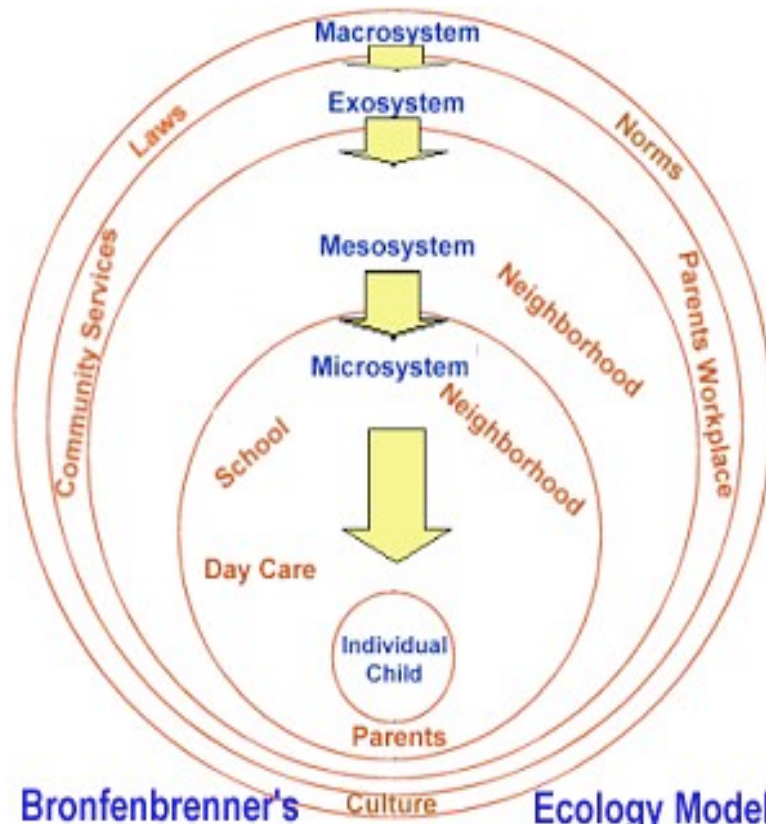
Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1990). Discovering what families do. In *Rebuilding the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family*. Family Service America.

Definition of Key Terms

1. Poverty: Is the state of having little money or material possessions. The U.S. Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine poverty levels. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

2. At Risk: The probability that a student will either fail academically or drop out of school (Hostler, 1982).

3. Resiliency: "Is defined a process in which individuals overcome hardship and adversity to create lives that are meaningful and successful" (Van Hook, 2008, p. 3).

4. Engagement: Is a student's willingness to participate in routine school activities, such as attending classes, completing the required work, and following the teachers' instructions in class (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1992).

5. Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is one's self- judgment of one's ability to perform a task in a specific domain (Bandura, 1982).

6. Self-regulation: Refers to self-generated thoughts, actions and feelings that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goals (Zimmerman, 2000).

7. Optimism: Refers to ones' perception that good things, rather than bad things will happen (Carver & Scheier, 1981).

8. Wellness: Coulter (1993) defines wellness as a way of life where

harmony of the mind, body and spirit are achieved through adopting a healthy lifestyle.

9. Connectedness: "Is defined as an increased sense of well-being that comes from feeling connected to others, and the ability to act positively both within and beyond the boundaries of the relationship, increased self-knowledge and knowledge of the "other" in the relationship, an increased sense of self-worth, and the desire for additional connections" (Riggs & Bright, 1997, p. 220).

10. Motivation: Refers to goal oriented behavior or a reason to behave in a certain manner (Amrhein, Miller, Yahne, Palmer, & Fulcher, 2003).

11. Achievement: Is passing grades through high school, and reasonable scores on standardized achievement tests, and the ability to graduate from high school on time (Finn & Rock, 1997).

Assumptions

The researcher is assuming that the student participants have been truthful through the course of the study by answering specific questions during the focus group sessions, and the one-on-one interviews. The researcher also assumes that their behavior and participation during the classroom observations has been authentic and has honestly reflected their opinions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding their academic success and resiliency.

Finally, the researcher assumes that resiliency is something that can be cultivated and learned. Schools can benefit from a culture that builds student resiliency.

Limitations

The data collected during this case study relied primarily on the truthfulness of the answers that are provided by the student participants during their interview, as well as during the focus group sessions. The results of this case study reflects these student participants beliefs regarding their academic success and is limited by the answers provided during the interview sessions.

The researcher selected the case study design because of the nature of the three research questions. The case study design offers the researcher an opportunity to investigate complex social units. In this case, by analyzing how the home, school, and community environments have all contributed to the academic success and resiliency of the student participants in this study.

The case study design reflects real life situations and offers a holistic account of a particular phenomenon. In addition, a case study design is appealing for applied fields of study such as in education and social work. Typically, case studies have been useful in studying and evaluating educational programs, which allows additional knowledge to emerge regarding a specific topic (Stake, 2005). In addition, a case study can also create a vivid example of

academic resilience and academic success, which can become a prototype that can be used by administrators and other educational leaders and professionals to transform educational practices, as well as educational outcomes (Eisner, 1991).

In qualitative case studies, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Case studies are limited by the bias, sensitivity and integrity of the researcher. Often times, the researcher might not be trained in observation and interviewing. As a result, the researcher relies on his or her own abilities and instincts during the course of the study.

Finally, a longitudinal study design would have yielded richer data that would have provided additional insights as to how students interacted with their home and school environment to allow them to progress from academic risk to resiliency.

Delimitations

This case study is limited in scope because it is bounded by time and space. The study has been limited to a maximum of seven months. It is also a purposive sample limited in number. In addition, the study focuses on one middle school in the high desert area of California. In addition, all of the student participants were Hispanic. Perhaps, if the study involved more participants, and a variety of students with varying socioeconomic, ethnic and racial backgrounds the results might have been different.

Researcher's Positionality

The researcher in this study is also an educator, who brings bias to study due to one's race, one's gender, and one's religion. This in turn, can contribute to an extent, what the researcher wants to study, as well as any preconceived notions as to what the researcher feels works to foster academic success and resiliency. The researcher, in this case, must deal with how to control the bias as to not interfere with the data so it does not invalidate or corrupt the results.

Summary

Most researchers tend to study resilient traits in students, but do not identify specifically, the actions that contribute to a student's resiliency. This research study addresses how students move from school related risk for academic failure, to how they transition to academic success, and at the same time remain academically resilient. Many studies explore the qualities of resilient traits, but do not examine how resilient characteristics develop over time through the interaction of one's social and personal experiences as they relate to their home, school, and community environment.

What distinguishes these students from their academic peers? There are a variety of "protective factors" that relate to student resiliency. They include, emotional self-regulation, self-efficacy, optimism, and connectedness, or bonding

to a caring adult, and hopes for a bright and productive future. However, more research is needed of the mechanisms by which a student turns himself or herself around from being "academically at-risk" to "academically resilient." There is much that we do not know about the qualitative mechanisms that surround this "turnaround." Specifically, what are these student participants' doing that allows them to remain academically successful and resilient?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition of at risk students has changed quite dramatically over the last thirty years. At one time, at-risk was considered to be the result of a single factor in a youth's life (Pallas, 1989). Over time, educators and policymakers have identified different factors that identify youth as being at-risk.

For the purpose of this study, we will define at-risk students as being either male or female, who have the probability of failing academically, or dropping out of school. Some of the factors that contribute to a student being at-risk are: high crime neighborhoods, single parent homes, minority status, mother's education, living below the poverty level, poor performance at school, unemployment in the family, little to no support systems, abandonment, neglect, emotional or physical abuse, limited proficiency in English, or negative contact with police agencies (Legters, McDill, & McPartland,1993).

Fantini and Weinstein (1968) indicate that other causes for at-risk status were the failures of social institutions that are responsible for educating the youth of our country. In essence, all youth were considered at-risk because communities, families, work places, and religious organizations failed to assist individuals to achieve their full potential as human beings. It appears as though there needs to be a basic restructuring of these social institutions that educate youth.

The research conducted by Fantini and Weinstein (1968) indicate that there is a connection between the school, the family, and the community when it comes to educating society's youth. When there is a disconnect between any one of these social structures, it leads to a breakdown in one of the other social structures. In addition, all of these social structures have a dramatic influence on the success or failure of children. All three of these social structures needs to be held accountable if they are to successfully educate youth.

Finn and Rock (1997) support the research by Fantini and Weinstein (1968).   Finn and Rock (1997) studied a sample of 1,803 minority students who came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These students were classified into three groups on the basis of test scores, grades and academic persistence. The first group included academically successful students. They were considered to be resilient completers. In the second group, were academically unsuccessful students, who were considered to be non-resilient completers.   The dropouts or non-completers made up the third group.

The groups were compared in terms of psychological characteristics and also by measures of student engagement. The purpose of the study was to distinguish minority students from low-income homes who were academically successful from their less successful peers (Finn & Rock, 1997). In the study, the authors define academic success as: passing grades through high school, reasonable scores on standardized achievement tests, and graduating from high

school on time. The authors concur that the students in group one and two have shown high levels of resiliency to overcome numerous obstacles to achieve and maintain academic success. The hypothesis in this study was that resiliency partially explains why these students are actively engaged in school (Finn & Rock, 1997).

Engagement

Bronfenbrenner's theory suggests that one's development reflects, and is responsive to, the influence of several environmental systems. These include the mesosystem, where a child builds connections to the family, community, and the school. Engagement in school activities is critical to a student's academic success. Engagement is defined "as students' willingness to participate in routine school activities, such as attending classes, submitting required work, and following teachers' directions in class (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991).

In order for a student to be successful in school, they must be actively engaged in school. There is much more that goes into a student's academic success other than just earning passing grades. The research conducted by Finn and Rock (1997) illustrates the various levels of engagement that a student exhibits in order to be academically successful. These levels are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Levels of Engagement*.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Students arrive at school on time.	Students take the initiative.	Students participate in extra-curricular activities.
Students are prepared for class.	Students are more involved in their class work and in school.	Students participate in sports.
Students can answer the teacher's questions.	Students arrive before school and stay after school and they also do more than is required of them.	Students maintain their extensive academic work.

Note: Finn, J.D., & Rock, D.A. (1997). Academic Success Among students at risk for school failure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 82 (2), 231-234.

In level one, students take the initiative by arriving at school on time and are prepared to successfully complete the work assigned by their teachers. That requires that a student get enough rest to be prepared for the school day. If students neglect to maintain the proper amount of rest, they tend to arrive at school late and without the needed energy to be successful. That also means having paper, books, pencils, pens and other required supplies and material necessary to be successful in school. Most likely, if a student is prepared by having the required material, getting enough rest, and having completed the required work prior to class, the likelihood that they will be academically successful will be greatly increased.

In level two, students take ownership and responsibility for their actions, as well as their education. This is accomplished by going above and beyond what is required of them. This might consist of a student doing extra-credit work, arriving before school, or staying after school to complete work, or working with a tutor to maintain their good grades. Often times, these students will ask the teacher for extra work or volunteer their time to help in the classroom.

In level three, students not only maintain their academic work they are also involved in extra-curricular activities after school or outside of school. This might involve playing sports, being in a club, or being actively involved in their community in some capacity. These students are able to successfully manage their time, maintain good grades and also be involved in other activities.

Other researchers support the findings of Finn and Rock (1997). When students are actively engaged in their academic work, they are more successful academically and have fewer issues with behavior (Attwell, Orpert & Meyers, 1967; Cobb, 1972; Good & Beckerman, 1978; Perry, Guidubaldi, & Kehle, 1979). The achievement benefits are also consistent when students do more work than is required, turn in extra credit, use supplemental resources and have conversations with the teacher (Finchman, Hokoda, & Sanders, 1989; McKinne, Mason, Perkerson & Cliffors, 1975; Swift & Spivack, 1969).

Non-compliant behavior has the opposite effect. Inattentive students avoid calling attention to themselves, tend to give incorrect answers when called upon, and usually appear distracted or preoccupied. Disruptive students tend to

call attention to themselves for misbehaviors, which in turn interrupts and

disturbs the educational process. Both types of students typically do not do well

on achievement tests, and the inattentive students do even worse. Typically,

these behaviors carry over into high school, and many of these students continue

to lag behind academically (Dejung & Duckworth, 1986; Weitzman et al., 1985).

Schools, families, and communities are the primary educating institutions

in our society. Each of these educating forces needs to be considered when we

define and address students who are at-risk. Thus, children are at-risk if they

have been exposed to inappropriate or inadequate educational experiences in

the family, school, or the community (Pallas, 1989).

Families

The microsystem is part of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

(1979), which includes the family environment, as well as the interactions and the

relationships that children have with their surroundings. Unfortunately, many

families are forced to deal with social situations that are toxic in nature. Many

families live in communities with high crime rates. These same families can

experience violence in their neighborhoods and at home. They often lack the

basic services that would assist them to meet their core needs (Patterson, 2002;

Papero, 2005).   Reynolds (2005) indicates that access to quality childcare and

safe schools contributes to students staying in school and completing high

school. Having access to stable day care or childcare allows a child to form adult-child attachments, which foster resiliency, build protective factors, and reduce the chances for children to be at-risk for academic failure or for dropping out of school (Burchinal et al. 2000; Papero, 2005).

There are more than 12 million children under the age of 18 that live in poverty in the United States. That equates to one in five children who were living in poverty in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). A great number of these children are growing up in single parent households and frequently spend much of their childhood in poverty (Ellwood, 1988). In addition, in 2010 there were more than 17 million children under the age of 18 who lived in households where both parents were not present (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

A mother's education also places children at a greater risk of failure or dropping out of school. Highly educated mothers are better able to provide children with the necessary educational resources than are less-educated mothers. Children of well-educated mothers perform better in school and stay in school longer than children of mothers who have not completed high school. Disproportionately, Black and Hispanic children live with mothers who have dropped out of high school. Each student brings with them unique family backgrounds and experiences that may require a different set of educational needs (Reynolds et al., 2004).

Grayson (2000) identified several characteristics of at-risk youth. Negative role models, lack of structure and rules in the family, lack of community support,

violence, drugs, a lack of things to do, poor social skills, poor schools, bad grades, and chronic poverty.

The research conducted by Suh & Suh (2007) identified 16 risk predictors that were found to be significant to at-risk dropouts: low SES, low GPA at eighth grade, absenteeism, suspensions, sex prior to age 15, household size, city resident, fights at school, threats of harm, low GPA, behavioral problems, physical environment risk, students' expectation to stay in school, enrichment risk, peers planning to go to college, and whether or not there were two parents in the home. The researchers found that as the risk factors increased, the chances of students dropping out also increased. Finally, they also found that a lack of student engagement was a major determining factor as to whether the student dropped out of school.

Community

In the African American and Hispanic communities there is an awareness and a connection to an individual's identity, as well as their collective identity as part of their culture and their community as a whole (Helms, 1990). When an individual's identity is discussed, one cannot dismiss the interrelatedness of the group identification and the community in which the individual lives. For example, in a recent study of 20 high achieving African American adolescent high school students, Ward (1990) found that these students academic motivation was positively correlated to a positive view of their African American

or Black culture. This indicated that there was a high value placed on their Black culture, which supports their views of their own individual identity. African American adolescents struggle with constructing a strong sense of self by struggling to embrace a positive self image, while at the same time attempting to reject the negative portrayals that are common within the social settings (school, family, community) of their lives (Oyserman, Gant & Ager, 1995).

Marcia (1980) supports Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), by suggesting that a sense of belonging is formed or established when students form relationships within the family, their school, and their community. From this sense of belonging, adolescents are able to develop generosity or the ability to view the world through another person's point of view, thus, developing their own ability to be unselfish and giving members of their community.

The neighborhood and the entire community are reflected at the school site and they impact how the students behave while at school. In essence, the neighborhood's problems become the school's problems, which disrupt the homeostasis of the school. This affects at-risk students the most. As a result, students and their families are blamed for the cause of the disruptions, which only creates a greater disconnect between the student, the school, and the community (Marcia, 1980).

Schools

Students with three or more risk factors as stated by Horn and Chen (1998) are at a greater risk for dropping out of school than students with less than three risk factors. Even as early as eighth grade, the number of risk factors that affect a student can have long lasting effects and decrease, their chances of future college enrollment (Cabrera & Nasa, 2001). In addition, the chances of applying to college also decreases by seven percent for each risk factor that a student has during either middle school or high school. Horn and Chen (1998) have identified six risk factors of eighth grade students that are still with them in their high school senior year. The six factors include average grades of C or lower from first to eighth grades; having to repeat a grade from first to eighth grades; having an older sibling drop out of school; having changed schools two or more times from first to eighth grades; having a single parent family; and being in the lowest socioeconomic quartile (Horn & Chen, 1998). These factors also coincide with the findings of other researchers.

According to Edmonds (1979), research has demonstrated that schools have a significant impact on student achievement. Edmonds and other researchers indicate several factors that effective schools have that promote student achievement and academic success as illustrated in Table 6. Although these researchers differ on their opinion of what it means to be academically successful, most of them agree that academic success starts with having strong leadership, a positive school culture, and a focus on academic rigor.

Table 6. *Factors that Promote Academic Success and Achievement*

Edmonds (1979)	Carter (2001)	Reeves (2000)	Blankenstein (2004)	Picus (2004)	Dyson (2008)
Strong leadership	Principals establish a culture of achievement	Focus on academics	Common mission	Focusing on educating all students	Having a positive school culture
Safe and orderly environment	Having master teachers that bring out the best in the faculty	Clear curriculum choices	Common vision	Use data driven decisions	Students are part of a professional learning community
High expectations	Rigorous and regular testing	Frequent assessment of student progress	Common values	Adopt a rigorous curriculum and alignment to the state standards	Students work directly with a devoted group of teachers
Focus on teaching	Achievement is the key to discipline	Emphasis on writing	Common goals	Effective professional development	
Frequent monitoring on student progress	Principals that work closely with parents	External scoring on assessments	Strong leadership	Restructure the learning environment	
	Home is the center for learning		Solid curriculum	Provide struggling students with extended learning opportunities	
	Communicating and establishing a relationship of trust amongst parents		Solid hiring practices of teachers		

Dyson's (2008) study is an example of what works to improve students'

academic performance, as well as, reducing many of the at-risk factors that are

associated with students that come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. As you can see from the chart above, researchers vary on what they feel contributes to a student's academic success. There is no one size fits all approach. Public schools might incorporate a variety of these factors to improve student's academic performance. Within this study, an attempt is made to identify specific factors that schools can then replicate to foster academic success and resiliency.

At-Risk Students and Resiliency

Resiliency is defined as a process through which individuals overcome hardship to create and sustain lives that are meaningful and successful (Van Hook, 2008). For example, most families do have certain strengths they employ when they need to manage problems. Resiliency means that the family has strengths, but most professionals focus on the weaknesses. By recognizing strengths, the helping professions can focus on those as opposed to focusing on things that did not work and are problematic. The literature on resiliency tends to indicate that individuals overcome life's problems despite the lack of family resiliency. Even with the lack of resiliency, families tend to meet the challenges and needs of the family members in some capacity even though many of these strategies may appear dysfunctional (Van Hook, 2008).

In addition, Carter goes on to say that leaders must work to overcome bureaucratic and cultural barriers and have open lines of communication with

parents and students, which may prevent poor children and people of color from falling behind and failing in urban public schools. The data collected by Blankenstein (2004) supports the work done by Carter (2001). Picus (2004) found that when these six elements for academic success were met (see Table 6), student achievement and academic performance increased.

Whitney, Splett and Weston (2008) found that high risk students who had resiliency as a key factor tended to have better communication skills and higher academic scores. Typically, students who were in an environment that had many adversities in life usually showed greater levels of dysfunction. The cumulative effects on these high risk students added up, and as a result, most tended to suffer adversely. However, students that had social boundaries, were taught life skills, and had increased pro-social bonding with their parents, caregivers or teachers were less likely to suffer as a result of the dysfunction which went on in their families. These students exhibited high levels of resiliency.

<p style="text-align:center">The Larger Social System</p>

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) takes into account one's larger social system, as well as the values, laws, and customs associated within their community. Keeping in mind the definition of resiliency, for the purpose of this study, researchers have indicated several factors that need to be considered when looking at one's larger social system.

Cesarone (1999) indicates several other resilient factors in academically successful students. These factors include:

1. Students who work a part-time job

2. Involvement in extra-curricular activities

3. Positive role models

   A. Parent or parents

   B. Sibling

   C. Teacher

   D. Famous person

Cesarone also goes on to say that student's need to be able to identify areas of achievement in their lives. In addition, students who showed resiliency also believed their parents were also resilient. Other factors that contribute to a student's academic success and resiliency were parents that took an active role in their child's education by attending parent teachers' conferences and other school related activities and events.

Brokenleg and Van Bockern (1990) have identified four core needs that foster resiliency and motivate individuals to reach their potential. All are part of ones' customs, values and laws and are an integral part of any community. This model known as the "Circle of Courage" includes:

1. Belonging

2. Mastery

3. Independence

4. Generosity

The first core need is *belonging*. In the Native American cultures, one's significance was nurtured and supported in communities of belonging. The core value of belonging is, be related, somehow, to everyone you know. If we treat others as family or kin this builds strong social bonds that develop into respect. By supporting one another as family members, we take care of and provide for future generations.

In the second core need of *mastery;* children are taught to observe and listen to those individuals with more experience. For example, a member of the community with more experience serves as a teacher and a model for learning, not as a rival. The goal is for each person to strive for personal growth. No one is superior to another. Humans want to become competent and develop the ability to solve problems. By harnessing success in people, their desire to achieve is being reinforced.

The third core need is *independence;* children are encouraged to make decisions, show responsibility, and solve problems. Children are nurtured and given feedback about their choices and their decisions.

The final core need of *generosity* is for the individual to be unselfish and giving to others. By helping others, one creates his or her own proof of worthiness and you make a positive contribution to another human life (Brokenleg & VanBockern,1990).

Benrad (1991) supports the work of Brokenleg and VanBockern (1990) and indicates that resiliency in the larger social system is often conceptualized into two broad categories; (1) *personal strengths* and (2) *environmental factors*. The first category of *personal strengths* can be divided into four domains:

1. Social competence

2. Problem solving

3. Autonomy

4. A sense of purpose

The second category of *environmental factors* is:

1. Present in the family

2. In the community

3. In schools

4. And also includes caring relationships in the community, school, and the family.

For example, children with easy-going temperaments find it easier to communicate with adults, and children with more difficult temperaments tend to require greater environmental supports to be successful (Benrad,1996).

Resiliency is part of one's innate cognitive abilities, but it is also dependent on exposure to modeling and problem solving. However, most children grow up and have successful and productive lives as adults, even when they exhibit personalities that are not easy going as children. Research into resiliency has shown that social support has been a critical protective factor in

children who are able to overcome difficult experiences in their lives (Benard,

1991, 1996**).** All of these studies indicate resilient factors that are present in

Bronfenbrenner's Exosystem (1979), as well as in the macrosytem. All of which

might contribute to a student's academic success and resiliency in school.

<center>At-risk Students, Poverty and Achievement</center>

The mandates of No Child Left Behind in 2001, and the Improving

America's School Act in 1994, have focused extra attention and efforts on

minimizing disadvantages that a child might have which could interfere or hinder

his or her academic success (Picucci, Brownson, Kehlert, & Sobel, 2004).

Schools have numerous resources to address the needs of these students,

whether they are academic issues, behavioral issues, health needs or their social

welfare. Schools have, at their disposal, counselors, community resources,

principals, teachers, and heath care providers, especially, for those students who

are considered disadvantaged (Henry, McNab, & Coker, 2005; Perusse,

Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004).   The schools, which use these

resources, especially the counselors, have a much better chance of meeting the

school's academic and behavioral goals.

Schools all over the United States focus much of their efforts on reaching

students who have been identified as at-risk for dropping out of school due to

poverty (Henry et al., 2005). These students start off the school year the same as any other student. The school provides the same opportunities to each child. For example, they have the same teachers, go to the same school, are involved in the same social activities, eat the same food at lunch, are provided with the same books, and have the same opportunities for academic success. However, one child out of six will have a much greater chance of dropping out of school or of not graduating from high school, because they come from a low-income family (Laird,DeBell, Kienzl & Chapman, 2007). These students might be considered at-risk or disadvantaged due to their families socioeconomic status, cognitive deficiencies, behavioral issues, or their poor health (Robinson,1992; Suh & Suh, 2007).

Alexander et al., (2007) came to similar conclusions. These researchers found that one's socioeconomic status contributes to a child's academic success, well-being and health. The research that was conducted by Alexander et al., (2001) began in Baltimore in 1982. The study started with a group of students in first grade and followed them through elementary school, middle school and high-school. The study considered the student's background, which consisted of: their race, sex, mother's age, mother's employment status, families SES, their family situation, and any stressful family changes.

By as early as first grade several factors contributed to a student being at-risk for academic failure or for dropping out of school. These included students who were born to teenage moms, lived in a single parent's home, had stressful

homes due to divorce or death, or who relocated often. The students in this study that were held back during elementary or middle school had a dropout rate of 85 percent to 91 percent. These students came from either a low or medium SES. The students that had a favorable attitude towards school and maintained proper behavior in school had a lesser chance of dropping out of school. In fact, the risk for these students dropping out was cut by about 50 percent (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001).

No state in the United States is immune to the dropout crisis. One in six students drops out of school in the United States, and there are an estimated 800,000 students who drop out of high school annually (Johns Hopkins University, 2007). Although dropouts come from all socioeconomic backgrounds, low income and minority children are disproportionately affected. As a result, these students face many challenges that inhibit their ability to become successful and productive citizens. These same students are more likely to be unemployed, incarcerated, and receive public assistance than are high school graduates (Balfantz et al., 2008).

This dropout problem affects all of us, in that, each dropout costs the public sector approximately $209,000 over a lifetime, due to reduced tax payments, increased public health care and welfare costs, and a greater likelihood of criminal behavior (Levin et al., 2007). Over the next decade, dropouts will cost the United States almost three trillion dollars if the rate remains consistent. For example, if the entire class of 2007 had graduated, the United

States' economy would yield an additional $329 billion in income during these students' lifetime. Dropouts are also less likely to vote, contribute to their communities, and volunteer (Balfantz et al., 2008).

Social Factors and Poverty - Outside of School Factors

Unfortunately, teachers and administrators are often blamed for the low academic achievement of poor students. The problems of low academic achievement amongst America's poor are much more likely to be caused by social factors outside of the school (Berliner, 2009). Berliner has cited several factors that are outside of the school factors:

1. Alcohol and cigarette usage amongst poor pregnant women

    A. Contributes to having a low birth weight child.

    B. Smaller head circumference, which restricts the total brain volume

2. Methamphetamine use by poor women during pregnancy

3. Diabetes

4. Not having flu shots are another factor, which increases the risks of influenza.

5. Little to no dental or vision care

6. Little or no health insurance

7. Low food security

8. Pollution

9. Violence and poverty

Although schools must deal with parents and students who have mental impairments, schools that serve the poor must deal with a much greater population of people with mental illness. Are teachers and administrators responsible for this, or is this a societal problem? The problems are considered to be outside of school factors (OSF's). These are factors that teachers and administrators cannot control. The children from the poorer areas of the cities, as well as poor rural areas, suffer in much greater numbers than do children from wealthier suburban communities. Children who come from homes that exhibit warm and loving relationships have children who are, typically, mentally and psychologically healthier. Poverty is also a risk factor that contributes to the development of oppositional defiant and conduct disorders, which increases the likelihood that a child will commit a serious crime by 10 percent, and also contributes to a student's lack of academic success and resiliency. Youth who are in constant poverty tend to manifest psychosomatic problems, have increased anxiety, and increased rates of depression (Berliner, 2009).

In addition, students who relocate between the ages of 4-7 are 20 percent less likely to graduate from high school. These factors are also outside of the school functions. The teachers that serve these student populations have a greater burden that most likely cannot and will not be fixed by the mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) or the Common Core Standards (Berliner, 2009).

Payne (2009) found that to survive poverty one must be an incredible problem solver. Thus, a student must show resiliency, or the ability to overcome adversity if one is to be academically successful and overcome poverty.

Latino Culture and Resiliency

When we address academic success and resiliency one cannot ignore the influence that one's culture has in fostering both academic success and resiliency. In a longitudinal study by Hao et al., (1988), they examined how the family influences contributed to the academic success and achievement of eighth grade students, paying strict attention to ethnic variables. The researchers found lower levels of parent-child interactions amongst immigrant Mexican/Latino families than among immigrant Asian families. However, they also found that immigrant Latino students had one very strong advantage; comprehension of their parents' native language, which allowed for better communications, better grades, and increased test scores in math.

Gordon (1996) examined the self-concept and motivational patterns of 36 Hispanic youth in an urban school setting. Gordon found that the principal difference between resilient and non-resilient students was that the resilient youths had more faith in their cognitive abilities. The resilient youths excelled academically because they believed that they could understand the material and

information presented in class and that they could do well on homework and tests.

Benrad (1991) indicates that research in the fields of child and human development, effective schools, and competent communities reveals that successful development in any human system relates directly to the quality of relationships in the system and opportunities for participation in those relationships. Benrad goes on to say, three key characteristics support productive development: caring relationships, communication of high expectations, positive beliefs, and opportunities for participation. Werner and Smith (1992) argued that the most important of these protective factors is a caring relationship with someone, regardless of whether that person is a teacher, parent, or a community mentor.

Genevieve Johnson (1997) surveyed 38 inner-city principals and teachers regarding their personal and professional experiences with at-risk students who had demonstrated resiliency. The principals and teachers identified a broad range of compensatory factors focusing on the home, school, and community. These factors included: having positive goals and plans for the future, positive and nurturing relationship with parents and teachers, and connections to their community. These findings support Benard's study (1991).

Johnson (1997) indicated there were several contributing factors that contributed to academic success for inner-city and minority students. These include, having supportive relationships in the school, the family and the

community. Students who were able to develop positive relationships with their teachers and other school personnel tended to be more academically successful than students who had not developed these positive relationships. In addition having students who exhibit high levels of self-esteem and are motivated to be academically successful, and who also accept responsibility for their academic success. Another factor that contributed to their academic success and resiliency was being involved in pro-social skills training, sports and other activities in school. Also, being involved in community youth programs such as sports, clubs and hobbies.

Several promising programs have also assisted Mexican/Latino students to increase their resiliency. In a study by Mehan et al., (1996) the researchers found that by placing students from low-income, ethic and linguistic minority backgrounds into the Advanced Via Individual Determination (AVID) program which prepares students to take college classes with their high achieving peers, it was found that these minority students developed an academic identity, formed academically oriented peer groups, and recognized the necessity for academic achievement. As a result of this program, the students that participated had higher college enrollment compared with school district and national averages (Mehan, Villanueva, & Lintz, 1996).

In Houston, Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) targets high schools with high drop-out rates, and provides support and scholarships for students. The program begins preparing children for college while they are still in

kindergarten; it then targets elementary and middle schools that feed the high school. The project has resulted in higher rates of attendance, fewer disciplinary problems, and better test scores (McAdoo, 1998).

Schools all over the United States are experiencing alarming numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms. In the United States, a high number of English Language Learners (ELL) students are being placed into content area and grade level classrooms. Therefore, not just English teachers, but all teachers are responsible to teach English as a second language. As a result, many new practitioner based information has surfaced to address various instructional strategies or methods to teach ELL students. Although the literature addresses numerous strategies on how to teach ELL students, there are few resources that examine first-hand how these students experiences in school mold or shape their learning. Much of the research indicates that the problem is with the ELL students. In other words, it promotes a deficit model rather than exploring the structures that have contributed to their academic success and their resiliency (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006).

The researchers go on to say that specific structures in the schools, classrooms, and in the community affect ELL students' ability to access the appropriate resources to meet their academic needs. So, exactly how do ELL students learn? What are some of the strategies they utilize in the classroom to foster academic success and resiliency?

It is important for educators to use the appropriate methodology when

working with ELL students. Teachers must be willing and able to look at themselves and the community in which they serve, as well as the learning community within the school, and the relationships between these. Teachers must also develop empathy for these ELL students. Students need numerous opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings concerning what they have found to be empowering in school (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006).

Summary

Although poverty places a great number of students "at risk" and contributes to academic failure. And increases the dropout rate, there are options that can diminish the chances of a student either dropping out of school or failing academically. Educating youth needs to be a collective effort on the part of many social institutions, not just schools. If educators and administrators are able to build solid connections with the community, the workplace, religious organizations and families, these can significantly reduce the number of students who are at-risk and also diminish the number of students who drop out of school. There needs to be better communication among these social organizations. In addition, teachers and administrators also need to show empathy in dealing with ELL students and consider what their culture has contributed to their academic success and resiliency.

Academic success is defined as students who have passing grades, reasonable scores on standardized tests and graduates from high school on time

(Finn & Rock, 1997). With this definition in mind, there are also other significant factors that contribute to a student's academic success. Carter (2001) has indicated several factors that contribute to academic success. Academic success starts from the top and works down. First and foremost, a school must have strong leadership, solid curriculum, highly qualified teachers, trust, active and involved parents and effective professional development. In addition, a school must focus on academics; frequently assess student data and academic performance and they must also provide opportunities for students to improve (Carter, 2001).

Although all of these factors contribute to the academic success of students, what specific factors separate many of these at-risk students from their peers? Much of the research on academic success has focused on the factors that contribute to a student's academic success but fails to address what academic success actually looks like. The following social factors also contribute to a lack of academic success: negative role models, lack of structure in the home and in the community, drugs, violence, poverty, poor schools, a single parent home, low grades, and trouble with the law (Grayson, 2000, Horn & Chen, 1998).   Most of the research also fails to take into account one's cultural capital and ethnic background, as well as, student resiliency.   Much emphasis has been placed on the schools' lack of ability to provide quality education for all of the students they serve. However, much of what occurs in our public schools can be attributed to out-of-school factors. Yet schools are held accountable and also

expected to solve the problems that parents and society have been unable to correct (Berliner, 2009).

A different approach to a very old problem will be taken in this study. Why have many of our public schools failed to provide adequate and appropriate education for all students? Perhaps, the reason is that educators and researchers have been addressing the problem from the perspective of failure. Much of the research on academic success focuses on a one size fits all approach. In addition, most research focuses on what does not work. In other words, it focuses on a deficit model. This typically leads to more interventions and programs that do little to actually address what is really going on. So educators are socially reproducing academic failure. Perhaps the focus could be on what is working for these students who were at one time "at-risk" for academic failure but are now academically successful. By taking a pro-active approach it is easier to identify and isolate exactly what has been working for these students.

When educators attempt to address the specifics that have been contributing to a student's academic success and resilience they must consider all of the services schools have to offer. This will assist educators in addressing the overall well-being of all students, which is turn will contribute to better academic performance (Pianta & Walsh, 1998).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

The theoretical framework for this case study design is Urie Bronfenbrenner's "Ecological Systems Theory" (1979). Bronfenbrenner's systems theory views the individual as developing within a complex system of relationships. These relationships are affected in turn by the environment. The theory suggests that an individual is responsive to the influence of several environmental systems.

Typically, one takes an in-depth look at a particular situation rather than attempts a large-scale study. This case study research design provides in depth data that allow the researcher to analyze trends, patterns, and themes associated with the qualitative experiences and characteristics of those who move from risk to resiliency. Correlates of academic resiliency in past studies include: self-efficacy, optimism, student connectedness, and engagement. These factors will also be addressed as part of this study.

Appropriateness of the Design

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known. In addition, case study designs can also be used to gain new perspectives on

things about which much is already known, or to gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to express quantitatively. Specifically, much is not known about exactly what resilient students' do that makes them resilient and academically successful. It has been determined by the researcher that quantitative data alone cannot be used to adequately describe or interpret what these participants are actually doing that contributes to their academic success and resiliency. The researcher specifically addressed this issue.

The student participants selected for this study are a purposive sample of students with particular characteristics. They represent at-risk students who were academically successful and resilient. The researcher was able to infer from the case study how they were able to transition from risk to resiliency based on home, school, community, and personal experiences. The selection of six student participants allowed for specific themes and trends to develop. This examination revealed how the home, school and community influences have all contributed to their academic success and resiliency.

Student participant recommendations came from those educators who volunteered to participate. They had two weeks to identify students who were "at-risk" for academic failure in the sixth grade (see Appendix G), but who turned that around in the seventh grade (see Appendix H), and are now academically successful, and who continued that trend into the eighth grade. The researcher determined that, the final selection of the student participants was based upon a review of the student participant's cumulative files.

The student participants attended two focus group sessions that lasted from one to two hours each (see Research Timeline, Appendix M). The focus group sessions occurred at the beginning of the study, and again at the end of the study after all of the classroom observations were completed. This in depth approach for collecting data and information about the six student participants allowed for further elaboration on the synergistic nature of risk and resiliency. By conducting one-on-one interviews of the three teachers and the counselor, it offered each of them an opportunity to provide input from their perspective as to what made these specific student participants academically successful and resilient.

The research began in December of 2011 and continued until June of 2012. This study was approved by the researcher's committee, the IRB Board, the school district, and the principal at the school site. Consent letters were signed by all of the participants in this study, which included, the teachers at the middle school, the counselor at the school site and the student participants. In addition, consent letters were also signed by the principal at the school site, as well by the superintendent at the school district. The teachers, at the school site, had two weeks to send back their recommendations of students they felt met the criteria for selection (see Appendix G & H).

After the students were identified, signed parental permission letters were received by the researcher that granted their permission for the student participants to take part in this study. Once the parent permission letters were

received, the researcher then checked the student participant's cumulative files to determine the final selection. The students that agreed to participate in this study did so in writing and were free to withdraw at any time without any type of penalty from the researcher, the school, or the school district. From those students who met the criteria, six were selected to be in the study.

In the winter of 2012, the researcher conducted the first focus group session. During that session, the researcher asked specific questions to the student participants (see Appendix K). In addition, in February of 2012, the researcher started conducting classroom observations of the student participants, which continued until the late spring of 2012. A checklist was used by the researcher during the observations to determine their specific actions and behavior in class (see Appendix N). During this same time period, individual interviews were conducted by the researcher of each participant group; teachers, counselor, and the student participants. The interviews were all audiotaped and later transcribed word for word by the researcher.

The last focus group session took place in the spring of 2012. A final series of questions was asked by the researcher to the student participants (see Appendix L). Finally, in June of 2013, a follow-up interview was conducted of the three teachers and the counselor to gain specific insights as to their opinions and recommendations as to what they thought schools might do to foster resiliency and academic success in students (see Appendix G and H). Once all of the data had been collected, the researcher coded the data and conducted an analysis

using ATLAS.ti qualitative computer software.   The research timeline indicates

the specific sequence of procedures.

Research Timeline

(Appendix M)

December, 2011	Obtain IRB Board approval
December, 2011	Obtain signed consent letters from teachers and the Counselor (see Appendix D)
December, 2011	Review the teacher and counselor recommendations based on a set Criteria (see Appenendix F and G).
January, 2012	Send parent permission letters out based on Teacher recommendations (see Appendix G and H).
January, 2012	Receive parent permission letters back
January, 2012	Check student cumulative files upon parental, district and principal permisison (see Appendix B, D and E). Select 6 student participants (see Appendix G & H)
February, 2012	First focus group meeting (see Appendix K).
February to May 2012	Classroom observations conducted by the researcher(see Appendix N).
March to April 2012	Audio taped interviews of the 6 student participants, the 3 teacher's and the counselor

May, 2012	Last focus group meeting (see Appendix L).
June, 2012	Coding of the data and data analysis utilizing ATLAS.ti qualitative software
June, 2013	Follow-up interview of the teachers and the counselor

Objectives of the Study

Six cases of "academically at-risk" students will be explored to determine how during their transition year in sixth grade, they were able to move away from being academically at-risk and toward being academically successful. This transitioning from being at-risk in sixth grade and moving towards resilience in the seventh grade is critical to this study. The expectation is that these student participants will be able to maintain academic success and resilience in the eighth grade.

What distinguishes these students from their academic peers? There are a variety of protective factors that relate to student resiliency such as emotional self-regulation, self-efficacy, optimism, and connectedness, or bonding to a caring adult, and hopes for a bright and productive future. However, more research is needed on the mechanisms by which a student turns himself or herself around from being "academically at-risk" to "academically resilient". There is much that we do not know about the qualitative mechanisms that

surround this "turnaround." Specifically, what are these students doing that allows them to remain resilient and academically successful?

A specific set of questions was asked by the researcher during the interviews to gain insights as to what these students were doing that has contributed to their academic success and resiliency (see Appendix I). In addition to the interviews, two focus group sessions were also conducted to address this issue. For the focus group questions that were asked by the researcher to the student participants see Appendix K and L.

Finally, the researcher also conducted 36 classroom observations to identify specifically, the specific student participants' actions and behaviors in the classroom environment that contributed to their academic success and resiliency (see Appendix N).

Research Questions

1. What are the key characteristics that enable some middle school students to overcome numerous "at risk" factors and become academically successful immediately following academic failure?

2. What did these student participants do in the classroom on a daily basis that directly contributed to their academic success and their resiliency?

3. What are the strategies that schools use to foster resiliency, specifically for students who have been able to move from academic failure to academic success during middle school?

The researcher was interested in determining what factors allow students to be resilient and academically successful.

Purpose of the Study

This case study is an exploration of at-risk students who moved from academic risk to academic resiliency. The student participants in this study were identified as failing in school by the teachers at the school site in the sixth grade, but turned that around in the seventh grade, and continued to be academically successful and resilient in the eighth grade. The students who were identified in this study were failing two or more classes, had poor attendance, behavioral issues, exhibited poor social skills with adults and peers, and had average grades of C or lower from the first to the sixth grade (Appendix G & H). Although previous studies have explored risk factors and proactive factors that mediate these risks, there is still need for further understanding of how different children move or transition from at-risk school related behaviors to resilient school related behaviors. What contributes to a student being at-risk from a home, school, or community? What from these perspectives can contribute to some of these same students becoming academically resilient?

Participants

This case study consisted of six student participants who were selected from a purposive sample of participants based on the recommendations made from the teachers and the counselor at the school site, as well as by looking at student cumulative files to determine their grade point averages (GPA) during sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The ages of the student participants range from 13 to 14 years old. In addition, there were three teachers and one counselor that were randomly selected to participate in the study. All of the teachers and the counselor at the school site were given a consent letter with the opportunity to participate in this research study. However, only three teachers and one counselor were selected for this study out of a possible thirty four who were employed at the school site as either a teacher or a counselor. There was not a specific criterion for teacher and counselor selection. It was on a volunteer basis and the researcher made the final selections. The researcher selected one English teacher, one math teacher and either a history or a science teacher to participate in this study. The researcher desired to have the insights across multiple disciplines. If there are more than three teachers and one counselor that wanted to participate in the study; the researcher made the final random selection.

Only the teachers and counselor who agreed to participate in the study was given a set criteria associated with their students' "academic, home, school, and community risk" (Appendix H) and set criteria associated with their students'

"academic resiliency" (Appendix G). They selected students who met the criteria for academic risk when they were in the sixth grade during the academic year 2009/2010, but who also meet the criteria for academic resiliency in the seventh grade during the academic year 2010/2011, and who maintained academic resiliency in the eighth grade during the academic year of 2011/2012.

Methodology

This case study was exploratory in nature because there was no clear set of expected outcomes. The study utilized Urie Bronfenbrenner's "Ecological Systems Theory" (1979). However, the study was guided by the three research questions listed in the previous section. It was anticipated that specific trends and themes would emerge from the student participants' perspectives as to their experiences of school, community, and the home pertaining to their academic success and their resiliency.

This case study was also bound by time and place, in that, the case study was conducted over approximately a seven month time period to ensure consistency in the student participants behavior and performance at a middle school, and the student participants was limited to Hispanic eighth grade students who transitioned from risk to resiliency during the sixth and seventh grade years and maintained that resiliency in their current eighth grade year. The criteria used for student selection was clearly defined (Appendix F and G) as

are typical in a case study. The specific interviews and focused group questions

have been clearly established (Appendix I, J, K and L) as has been the content of

the three research questions that guided the study.

The instruments included semi-structured interviews with open-ended

questions, classroom observations, field notes, a researcher's diary, and two

focus group sessions. These instruments were used to gain perspective as to

what the student participants thought was responsible for their academic success

and resiliency. There were a specific set of questions associated with the

students interviews, the teachers and counselor interviews and the two focus

group sessions (see Appendix I, J, K and L). During the classroom observations,

the researcher made observations to verify if the student was engaged in the

lesson, listening effectively, taking notes, participating in the lesson, and

behaving properly in class (see Appendix N for the observations). This allowed

for triangulation of the data that was collected from the focus group sessions,

interviews, and the classroom observations. This ensured consistency in the

data and allowed for emerging trends and themes to develop. The trends and

themes that emerged as part of the research process identified how students

transitioned from academic risk to academic resiliency.

This study took place over a seven-month time frame. The researcher

first obtained IRB Board approval in December of 2011. Upon IRB approval,

consent letters were distributed to all of the teachers at the school site where the

research took place. From those consent forms, three teachers and one

counselor were selected to be in the study. Once the educators had been identified and selected to be in the study, they made recommendations based on a specific set of criteria for student selection (Appendix F and G). This process took place during December of 2011.

In January of 2012 parent permission letters were sent home to the students that were identified as being at-risk based on the teachers and the one counselor's recommendations (see Appendix G and H). The parent permission letters were also received back in January of 2012. Once the signed parental, district, and the principal's permission letters were received by the researcher (see Appendix B, C, D, E, and F), the researcher was able to check the cumulative files of the pool of participants. From that list, six student participants were then selected to participate in the study.

In February of 2012, the first focus group session took place. There were specific questions that were asked by the researcher to the student participants during that meeting (Appendix J). The researcher also started to conduct the classroom observations during that time. There was a specific checklist that was used during the classroom observations (Appendix N). The classroom observations continued until May of 2012. The researcher observed each of the student participants six times at various times and in different classes over the four month time period. The student participants were observed in English, math, science and history classes. There were 36 total observations that were conducted of the six student participants from February of 2012 until May of

2012. In addition, the researcher also conducted one-on-one interviews of the six

student participants, the three teachers, and the one counselor beginning in

March of 2012 and ending in April of 2012. All of the interviews were audio-taped

and later transcribed by the researcher.

The last focus group session took place in May of 2012. The researcher

asked specific questions to the student participants during that focus group

session (see Appendix K). From the two focus group sessions and the one-on-

one interviews, the data was then coded and analyzed using ATLAS.ti software

to identify specific trends and themes that emerged from the data collection.

Finally, in June of 2013, a follow up interview was conducted of the three

teachers and the counselor to gain additional insights as to what schools can do

to foster academic success and resiliency.

Data Collection

The data collection took place over approximately a seven-month period

to ensure consistency in the data and in the participants' actions and behaviors

beginning in December of 2011. After parent permission letters were collected,

six students were selected for participation in this case study. At that time, the

first focus group meeting took place. The questions that guided the first focus

group meeting can be found in Appendix K. During winter of 2012, the three

teachers and the counselor, as well as the student participants were interviewed

one time for approximately one to two hours (Appendix I and J). In addition, the

six student participants were observed in the classroom (Appendix N) The

observations began February of 2012 and continued through the spring of 2012.

The student participants were observed six times each during various periods for

approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes per observation. There were a total of

36 classroom observations made during this time period. A checklist of

behaviors was used as part of the observation process (Appendix N). The last

focus group meeting took place in May of 2012 (Appendix L).

Finally, in June of 2013 a follow-up interview was conducted of the three

teachers and the counselor to gain specifics insights as to their opinion as to

what schools can do to foster resiliency and student academic success (see

Appendix N).

In summary, teacher/counselor and student participant interviews were

conducted, and classroom observations were also conducted six times per each

student participant for a total of 36 classroom observations to ensure the

consistency of the student participants' actions and academic performance. In

addition, field notes were also taken to record anything specific that occurred.

The researcher also conducted two focus group sessions to gain specific insights

from the student participants' perspective. One that was conducted at the

beginning of the research study in February of 2012, and the final one was

conducted in May of 2012 (Appendix H, I, J, K and M). In addition, an audio copy

of the interviews was used to ensure accuracy and consistency in the data. Both

the focus groups and the one-on-one interviews took place after school in a private classroom. The classroom observations took place during school hours while the student participants were in the classroom to observe exactly what the student participants were doing in the classroom in terms of their behavior and actions.

These data collection procedures and questions asked by the researcher provided the student participants with numerous opportunities to express their opinions as to their academic success and resilience. In addition, the researcher also kept and maintained a diary with specific dates and times of each classroom observation, interviews, focus group sessions and any other important information that was vital to the case study (Appendix N).

Data Analysis

The data that emerged from this study addressed pattern matching and explanations building as to specifically, what these students did and said that contributed to their academic successful and resiliency. The data was coded and analyzed by the researcher using ATLAS.ti qualitative software. The software was used to detect trends, patterns, and common themes from the teacher, counselor, and student participant interviews, as well as from the first and second focus group sessions. The researcher managed, shaped, and made sense of the unstructured data and information that was collected during this case study.

In addition, it also allowed the researcher to gain valuable insights, and determine meaningful conclusions from the data that was collected.

Dissemination

The results of this case study are available to the three teachers, one counselor, and the six student participants that participated in the study upon their request. In addition, the results of this case study will be a part of the researcher's doctorate dissertation/thesis and also could be a part of future publications. The researcher maintained strict confidentiality of the student participants throughout the entire data collection process. All the data that was collected is stored in a locked safe in the researcher's home.

The researcher examined a rural middle school in Southern California. The middle school had a student population as follows: African American 22.8%, American Indian 0.8%, Asian 2.0%, Hispanic/Latino 59.3%, Pacific Islander 0.9%, White 11.8%, two or more 2.4% and none indicated at 0.7% as indicated by the school accountability report card (SARC, 2012). The case study unfolded as the data was being collected, and it was anticipated that emerging trends, themes and words would describe the student participants' experiences of school, community, and the home as they pertained to their academic success and resilience.

Summary

This chapter indicates exactly what the researcher wanted to accomplish and the process to get there. The study took place over a seven month time frame. The researcher conducted interviews, classroom observations and one-on-one interviews of all of the student participants. The researcher also conducted interviews of the three teachers and the one counselor. The study was guided by the three research questions. The next chapter addresses the findings and analysis, and it also provokes discussion of future implications and research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings from the case study of a rural middle school in southern California. The researcher identified and examined the school structures and systems that promote high academic achievement and resiliency among a select group of middle school students. A case study approach was used to collect and analyze data to gain an understanding of the effective practices of the student participants who exhibit a high level of resiliency and high academic achievement. The conceptual framework focused on Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). The data was organized and analyzed to address the two research questions and the related trends and themes that emerged from this study.

The findings from the study were related to these three research questions:

1. What are the key characteristics that enable some middle school students to overcome numerous "at risk" factors and become academically successful immediately following academic failure?

2. What did these student participants do in the classroom on a daily basis that directly contributed to their academic success and their resiliency?

3. What are the strategies that schools use to foster resiliency, specifically, for students who have been able to move from academic failure to academic success during middle school?

Organization of the Findings

This research study was conducted at a rural middle school in the high desert area of southern California. The student participants at this school site met specific criteria for selection that was indicated by the researcher (see Appendix F & G). The researcher wanted to investigate what this group of Hispanic students did that assisted them in transitioning from being at-risk for academic failure in the sixth grade to becoming academically successful in the seventh grade, and thus continuing to be academically successful in the eighth grade.   A case study was used because it allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding as to exactly what these student participants did that contributed to their academic success and resiliency.

This school site was selected because it met specific criteria which included: (a) a rural public school with diverse racial and ethnic cultures, (b) Title 1 school, (c) a high-poverty school indicated by 85% of the student population receiving a free or reduced lunch, (d) 89% of the student population are students of color, (e) small but consistent API and AYP growth for all subgroups, (f) a student population of over 900 students.

The average in California of students that received a free or reduced lunch during school calendar years 2011 and 2012 was approximately 57% (www.kidsdata.org). The school site in this study had a student population that received a free or reduced lunch was 28% higher than the state average.

This chapter presents the trends and themes that emerged from the data collection. The trends and themes that emerged from the study were then used to answer the three research questions. The data was coded and analyzed using ATLAS.ti qualitative computer software by the researcher.

 The results of this study illustrate factors that have contributed to the student participant's academic success and resiliency. It also demonstrates what schools can do to foster resiliency in students. The goal of the study was to identify what these student participants did in and out of school that has contributed to their academic success and their resiliency. The findings of this case study were guided by the three research questions indicated above.

Data Collection

Several instruments were used to collect the data for this study. The instruments included: semi-structured interviews with open ended questions, classroom observations, two focus group sessions, a diary to record dates, times, and subject area, as well as field notes to make notations of specific things that occurred during the classroom observations. One at the beginning of the

study, and the other conducted at the end of the study. The researcher asked

several questions at each focus group session (Appendix J & K). The classroom

observations took place over a six-month period during various periods

throughout the school day to ensure the consistency of the behavior and

performance of the student participants (Appendix N). The researcher used

classroom observations to gain access to the specific behaviors and practices

that these student participants were doing that contributed to their academic

success and resiliency.

In addition, all one-on-one interviews were audiotaped and transcribed

verbatim by the researcher. The researcher interviewed six student participants,

one counselor and three teachers. In addition, a follow-up interview was

conducted of the three teachers and the counselor at the end of the study. The

interview process allowed the researcher to uncover evidence that provided

depth to the study. In addition, interviews are one of the most important aspects

of case study research (Yin, 2009).

This chapter begins with the background of the community to establish the

societal influences that have impacted these six student participants'

performance and academic achievement.

Community Profile

The city was established in 1915 and produced a variety of fruits. In

addition, the area was initially going to house a respiratory hospital, but later

became a site for a military installation. The city is one of the smallest cities in California.

The 2010 census reported a population of 31,765, with the following racial breakdown: 58.3% Hispanic, 20.5% Black, 17% White, 1.9% Asian and 2.3% other.   The median household income is $43,305 per year. In addition, persons below the poverty level are 25.6% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). There are approximately 7,800 households. Out of those households, approximately (63%) of them had children under the age of 18 living in them. The average household size was 3.83 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

School Profile

The school district consists of 12 schools and had an enrollment of over 8,600 students. The school used for this study had an approximate student population of over 900 students. The school consists of 40 classrooms, a library, teacher resource room, a multi-purpose room, which is also used as a gym, a second gym, two locker rooms and a large outdoor area for sports and play. The school is on a traditional track that starts in August and ends in June. The school, at the time of the study, had 36 full-time teachers, one counselor, a principal, and a dean of discipline. At the time of the study, the ethnic and racial makeup of the school was 89.2% students of color. Approximately 30% of the student populations are English Language Learners (ELL).   As per the school's accountability report card (SARC, 2012), 83.8% of the teachers were fully credentialed (www.aesd.net).

Table 7 below indicates the specific goals these six student participants were working towards. Their goals assisted them in maintaining their academic success and their resiliency.

Table 7: *Participants Profiles.*

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Goal
Student Participant 1	Female	14	Hispanic	College/Lawyer/Criminal Investigator
Student Participant 2	Female	14	Hispanic	College/Writer/Photographer
Student Participant 3	Female	14	Hispanic	College/Medical Doctor
Student Participant 4	Male	14	Hispanic/Caucasian	College/Plastic Surgeon/Navy Seal
Student Participant 5	Male	14	Hispanic	College/Police/Swat Team
Student Participant 6	Male	14	Hispanic	College/NFL/Astronomer/Professor
Teacher 1	Female	56	Hispanic	N/A
Teacher 2	Female	41	Caucasian	N/A
Teacher 3	Female	41	Caucasian	N/A
Counselor	Female	55	Caucasian	N/A

The researcher used a variety of instruments to collect the data that was vital to the research process. Table 8 below identifies the specific data sources used in this process.

Table 8. *Data Collection Process.*

Type	Data Sources
Demographics Focus Groups	Cumulative Files, recommendations for selections based on a specific set of criteria set by the researcher.
Focus Groups Two Sessions	6 student participants
Interviews	-6 student participants, 3 teachers and 1 counselor -One follow-up interview of the 3 teachers and the 1 counselor
Observations	6 classroom observations were conducted for each

Table 9 below identifies the specific instruments used during the data collection process.

Table 9: *Data Collection by Source.*

Source	Interviews	Observations	Focus Groups
Student Participant 1	X	X	X
Student Participant 2	X	X	X
Student Participant 3	X	X	X
Student Participant 4	X	X	X
Student Participant 5	X	X	X
Student Participant 6	X	X	X
Teacher 1	X		
Teacher 2	X		
Teacher 3	X		
Counselor 1	X		

Coding Process

The researcher used Atlas.ti qualitative software to analyze the results of the two focus group sessions, as well as the individual interviews of all of the participants. The researcher used open and emic coding to look for distinct concepts, ideas or trends in the data, which in turn formed the basic units of analysis.   From these basic units or trends specific codes were developed.

Open coding is what is happening inside the data. This process of coding is called line-by-line coding, which is important to build concepts and categories. However, the researcher can also look into a bit broader scale and code against a sentence, statement or a paragraph, which is what the researcher did in this case. This allows the researcher to define specific concepts or themes (Seidel, 1995).

In addition, the researcher took an emic approach. With this approach, the researcher attempts to put aside any preconceived assumptions to allow the participants and the data to speak for themselves. This allows for trends, codes and themes to emerge from the data that was collected. This approach is at the core of grounded theory and it is typically used when certain topics have not been heavily researched, as in this particular case (Lett, 1990).

Each interview was imported into ATLAS.ti qualitative software and coded to obtain the emerging trends and themes. Step 1, the researcher looked for specific words, phrases, and sentences that all of the student participants used during the first focus group session. From the first focus group session, the

researcher was able to identify specific trends (see Table 10) and thus developed those trends into codes. Those trends became the codes to code the rest of the data.

Step 2, the researcher then took the student participant ideas and phrases and developed those into trends. One hundred percent of the student participants gave similar responses during the first focus group session.

Step 3, the researcher then used those trends to code the rest of the data. Then the researcher coded the data from the second focus group session, and the one-on-one interviews of the student participants to develop the specific themes (see Table 11).

Step 4, in addition, the teachers and the counselor responses from their interviews was also imported into ATLAS.ti and then coded to address research question three.

As the data unfolded, the researcher took the student participant responses that had the most data and developed those codes, which became the common trends. From there, the researcher developed six major themes. The researcher then developed those themes to address and answer research questions one and two (see Table 11).

According to Yin (2009), interviews are one of the most important aspects of case study research. The interview process allowed the researcher to uncover evidence that provided depth to the study.

All of the answers provided during both focus group sessions, as well as from the interviews were read by the researcher and specific text was selected and imported into the ATLAS.ti qualitative software. As a result of the student participant responses, specific categories were created by the researcher to further address the trends and themes that emerged from this study.

In addition, the researcher assigned a specific code to each of the student participants to maintain participant confidentiality and to protect their identity. The researcher coded student participant one as S1. Student participant two was coded as S2. Student participant three was coded as S3. Student participant four was coded as S4. Student participant five was coded as S5. Student participant six was coded as S6.

In addition, the researcher coded teacher one as T1. Teacher two was coded as T2. Teacher three was coded as T3, and the counselor was coded as C1. The researcher was able to break the student participant responses into specific trends (see Table 10).

From those specific trends, the researcher was able to then determine specific themes (see Table 11). Once those themes were identified, the researcher was able to specifically address research question one and two.

Review of the Findings

The researcher conducted two focus group sessions, interviews, classroom observations, and field notes to acquire data on the practices and habits of academically successful and resilient students. The data collected in this study was uploaded into ATLAS.ti qualitative software for chunking and coding, which resulted in certain trends, as well as six specific key themes.   The results of the data collection were then used to address and answer the two research questions.

Data Analysis

The researcher used ATLAS.ti qualitative software to decipher the data from the two focus group sessions, as well as from the one-on-one interviews. The analysis and coding process was used to identify specific trends and themes that emerged during the course of this study. The researcher utilized the case study approach to address the three research questions because case studies provide rich and detailed accounts of the student participants' experiences concerning their academic success and resiliency (Creswell, 2007).

The goal was to identify specifically, what these students did that contributed to their academic success and resiliency in school. The three research questions guided the focus of this study.

Ethical Considerations

There were several ethical considerations that the researcher had to consider during the course of this study. First, the researcher had to obtain permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University, San Bernardino. In addition, the researcher also had to obtain permission to conduct the study from the dissertation committee. The researcher had to follow all of the rules and regulations set forth by the IRB at the university, and also adhere to the dissertation committees' directives.

In addition, participation in this study was voluntary and participant confidentiality was maintained throughout the entire process to protect the human subjects. The researcher obtained signed written consent letters from all of the participants. All of the participants were also allowed to withdraw at any time during the course of this study without any type of penalty from the school, the school district, the university or the researcher. There were no foreseeable risks associated with this study. All of the participants in this study were assigned a number that was used during this entire process. To further protect their identity, all records were kept in a locked safe at the researcher's home.

Results and Analysis

This section specifically addresses and answers each of the research questions that guided the focus of this study.

What are the key characteristics that enable some middle school students to overcome numerous "at risk" factors and become academically successful immediately following academic failure?

This question focused on student outcomes and the specific things that each of them did both in and out of school that has contributed to their academic success and resiliency.

Trends

After the data had been analyzed by the researcher from the first focus group session, the researcher was able to determine certain trends, ideas or phrases that were repeated by one hundred percent of the student participants that was associated with student achievement. Then, from the first focus group session, the researcher developed those trends into codes, which assisted the researcher in coding the rest of the data (see Table 10).

The researcher then coded all of the rest of the data from the second focus group session, the interviews, and the classroom observations. From that data, the researcher was able to develop the six specific themes (see Table 11).

Table 10. *Trends that Emerged from Focus Group Session 1.*

1. Involvement in extra-curricular activities in and out of school
2. Specific goals for their future
3. Positive relationships with their parents and teachers
4. Prepared for class
5. Completing the assigned homework
6. The confidence and motivation to do well
7. Parents or caregivers who were actively involved in their education and their lives

One hundred percent of the student participants exhibited these common trends from the questions that were asked by the researcher during first focus group session that took place in February of 2012 (Appendix J).

The trends that emerged from the first focus group session allowed the researcher to focus on specific areas that emerged from that session. As a result, the researcher was able to determine emerging themes from both focus group sessions, as well as from the one-on-one interviews. These themes were used to further address in depth, the characteristics that contributed to these student participants academic success and resiliency. The researcher was then able to identify specific themes that emerged as a result of this study based upon the questions posed during this process (Appendix I & K). From the data that was collected, the researcher then coded and analyzed the specific themes that emerged based on the responses of the student participants (see Table 11) for the specific themes.

Table 11. *Emerging Themes.*

Six Emerging Themes
Theme 1: Parents and Caregivers
Theme 2: Motivation/Behavior/Attitude
Theme 3: Goals/Beliefs about college
Theme 4: Academic success
Theme 5: Extra-curricular
Theme 6: Resiliency

Theme 1: Parents and Caregivers

One of the themes that emerged from the data analysis was the influence that the student's parents and caregivers had on their academic success and resiliency. Based on the data collected, parents and caregivers greatly influenced these student participants to perform well, which also gave them the confidence that they could be academically successful. The support that these student participants received from their parents was instrumental in enabling them to transition from academic failure in the sixth grade, to academic success in the seventh grade, and continue to maintain that success in the eighth grade. Table 12 illustrates the student participant responses from both focus group sessions, as well as from the one-on-one interviews. It reflects how the student participant's parents/caregivers have influenced their academic success, which in turn has also contributed to their academic resiliency. It also reflects how their home environments, as well as their school and community environments have

contributed to their academic success by having supportive parents and caregivers.

Theme 2: Motivation/Behavior/Attitude

Another important factor that has contributed to these student participants' academic success and resiliency is the motivation they have to be successful. All of the student participants were highly motivated to do their best at all times. All of the student participants realized that in order to be successful, they needed to behave well in class. All of them also exhibited a positive attitude and took an

Table 12. *Parents/Caregivers.*

Participant	Parent/Caregivers Responses
Student Participant 1	*I think my father has contributed to my academic success. My parents helped me a lot. They said, if I want to be successful, I must work hard, have good grades and goals.*
Student Participant 2	*My mom has contributed to my academic success. I look at my life and I realize that almost nobody in my family went to college. I want a better life for myself and my family. I know my family cares for me. I will repay them someday. Dad and mom would always give me speeches as to how valuable education was.*
Student Participant 3	*I now have more interest in school. The values that my parents and teachers have taught me also helped me.*
Student Participant 4	*My parents have encouraged me to earn good grades.*
Student Participant 5	*My father pushed me to do well. My parents push me to complete the work and will help me when I need help. I feel in order to have a good job, you must have a good education.*
Student Participant 6	*Both my parents and my teachers have greatly influenced and encouraged me to do well and to be successful.*

Note: Participant Personal Communications (March 2012)

active part in each of their classes. This was clearly evident during the course of this study. The classroom observations conducted by the researcher also verified and confirmed the responses each of them gave during the two focus group sessions, as well as during the one-on-one interviews. Table 13 indicates their responses regarding their motivation, attitude and behavior.

All of the student participants were motivated to be successful, exhibited excellent behavior in class, and had the attitude that they could be successful. This was clearly demonstrated throughout the entire study. Although there were distractions from other students during class time, each of the student participants were able to ignore those distractions and focus on the teacher. This motivation to do well against any and all odds was clearly exhibited throughout the entire course of the study.

Theme 3: Goals

One of the themes that were extremely evident was that all of the student participants had very clear and specific goals and aspirations. In addition, they all appeared to have a vision of how they would reach those goals. Their goals continued to motivate them on a daily basis. All of the student participants realized that in order to obtain their goals; they had to do well in school. In addition, all of the student participants realized that college would assist them in reaching their specific goals. These opinions were demonstrated during both focus group sessions, as well during the one-on-one interviews.

Table 14 identifies their goals, and how those goals have contributed to their academic success and resiliency.

Table 13. *Motivation/Attitude/Behavior.*

Participant	Motivation/Attitude/Behavior Responses
Student Participant 1	Motivation: *It is hard to be motivated by someone else cheering them on or someone telling you, you are worth something. You earn it. In my case, my parents motivate me. I do well now, and I am motivated.* Behavior: *I enter the classroom, sit down, get out my paper and I am ready to learn when the bell rings. I look at the board, which helps. I also complete all of the required work that the teacher assigns both in and out of class.* Attitude: *If I do well now, I know, I will do well In the future.*
Student Participant 4	Motivation*: I want to have a good life. This is what motivates me.* Behavior*: I pay attention in class. I write things down and I maintain order by using a three-ringed binder. I focus on the teacher.* Attitude*: I know school is challenging. I know it is what I must do to be successful.*
Student Participant 5	Motivation*: My dad is a police officer in Los Angeles. He keeps me motivated to do well. He explains to me the importance of an education.* Behavior*: I maintain my focus in class by ignoring others. I work hard and I pay attention to my teachers. If I need to, I move seats to get away from distractions.* Attitude*: I have many friends at school. I enjoy being at school and learning.*
Student Participant 6	Motivation*: I want to have a better life. Nobody on either side of my family went to college. This motivates me to do well.* Behavior*: I multi-task in class by doing my work and listening to the teacher. At the end of class, I try to summarize what I learned in class.* Attitude*: I like my teachers and I know they do their best for me.*

Note: Participant Personal Communications (March 2012)

Table 14. *Goals.*

Participant	Goals Response
Student Participant 1	*I want to be a lawyer and have a family. It would be an honor to get a full ride scholarship. In 10 years, I see myself finished college and having a job as a lawyer or a criminal investigator.*
Student Participant 2	*I want to be a writer or a photographer. I want to live in New York and have a good career, and perhaps raise a family and give them a good life. I know if I work hard and earn good grades it will help me in the future. I see myself in college in five years and working part-time in New York, or possibly writing my own books, fiction or novels, or possibly a newspaper reporter or doing stories or biographies*
Student Participant 3	*I see myself going where I want and practicing it. My grades in school, as well as AVID are helping me to get where I am, and where I want to be. I want to be a doctor.*
Student Participant 4	*I want to be a Navy seal or a plastic surgeon. I want to help people in my life. In ten years, I see myself in college working on my degree in medicine.*
Student Participant 5	*I see myself in college in five years and later starting a family and having my own home. I am interested in being a cop like my dad or having my own business.*
Student Participant 6	*In 5 years, I see myself as a freshman in college. In 10 years, in the NFL or as a professor and being an expert on Greece and Greek mythology. I like history. I figure, if I am smarter, and have better grades in school, I will have a greater chance to be the quarterback in college or in the NFL.*

Note: Participant Personal Communications (March 2012)

Theme 4: Academic Success

All of the student participants in this study were extremely concerned with their academic performance and their grades. It was evident from the responses given during the interviews, focus group sessions, and from the classroom observations that all of them went above and beyond what was asked of them in their classes. Each student participant actively participated in class projects, discussions, completed all of the required work on time, were well behaved, took notes and were well organized through the use of notebooks and binders. All of

these practices greatly contributed to their academic success. Table 15 indicates

how these student participants were able to become and remain academically

successful.

Table 15. *Academic Success*

Participants	Academic Success Responses
Student Participant 1	*Academic success means that you feel and know what is expected of you in school, and the grades you earn determine, what you have a chance to be. It does not matter what your background is, it is your fault is you are not successful. Your GPA, your attitude, and what you have done in your life, community service, and character all contribute to you going to college. Nobody wants to be without character.*
Student Participant 2	*Academic success means that you are not a bum. It also means that you are able to get a good career or a job. Going to college means everything in my life. College helps them to get a good job that pays better and gives them a good life.*
Student Participant 3	*Academic success means that you are successful in all of your classes and have good grades. It does not mean that you must have all A's. For me, a C in math could be successful because I am not good in that subject. Of course, A's would be fantastic. Education is good. It is good to learn because you will need it later in life. If one wants to be successful in life and be somebody, they must have determination.*
Student Participant 4	*Academic success means that you are able to acquire knowledge and use that knowledge to be successful. I think college is very valuable and the key to reaching my goals and having a good life.*
Student Participant 5	*Academic success means that you come to school and do all of your work. I get very nervous if my grades drop. College is valuable. I believe people will see, I am smart and want to be like me. I think it takes good grades and to follow your dreams. It will determine how much money I will make in a career. If I fail, I will not get a good job. You need to follow your dreams.*
Student Participant 6	*Academic success means you are smart and able to do things. College takes good grades and determination. If you don't have goals, then you have nothing to work for and to keep you going. I watched TV shows about college and saw that successful people had degrees.*

Note: Participant Personal Communications (March 2012)

<u>Theme 5: Extra Curricular Activities</u>

All of the student participants were involved in extra-curricular activites both in and out of school. Each student participant had a great sense of their community as a whole. For example, several of the student participants were involved in football, did volunteer work, were activiley involved in their school, as well as many other social activities outside of school. All of them kept very busy and were motivated by their goals and wanted to be contributing members of their school community, as well as their community as a whole. These were demonstrated in the focus group session, as well the interviews. Table 16 below indicates the types of extra-curricular activities they were involved in.

Table 16. *Extra-curricular Activities*

Participant	Extra-curricular Activities Responses
Student Participant 1	*Animal adoption and other school related activities*
Student Participant 2	*Band, tutoring and other school related activities*
Student Participant 3	*Tutoring and other school related activities*
Student Participant 4	*Football, band and other school related activities*
Student Participant 5	*Tutoring, helping teachers and other school related activities*
Student Participant 6	*Football and other school activities*

Note: Participant Personal Communications (March 2012)

<u>Theme 6: Resiliency</u>

All of the student participants exhibited a great deal of resiliency both prior to this study, as well as during this study. This attribute was the main focus of this study.   For the purpose of this study, "resiliency was defined as a process in which individuals overcome hardship and adversity to create lives that are meaningful and successful" (Van Hook, 2008, p. 3). Table 17 indicates specific events in these student participants lives during sixth grade that turned them around from failing academically to becoming academically successful and resilient. These responses were reflected in the interviews and the two focus group sessions.

Each of the student participants had specific events in their young lives that turned them around from failing in school, to becoming academically successful and resilient in school during their transition year in the sixth grade. Each student participant exhibited high levels of resiliency.   For some, it was sports that caused this transition.   For others, it was pride and not wanting to fail in school.   For others it was inspiration and encouragement from parents, teachers and a coach. No matter what the reasons, these student participants saw value in what they were doing and realized that certain expectations needed to be fulfilled for them to reach their goals. Their ongoing and continued resiliency has allowed them to transition from failing in the sixth grade, to becoming academically successful in the seventh grade, and maintaining that success in the eighth grade.

Table 17. *Resiliency.*

Participant	Resiliency Responses
Student Participant 1	*In the 5th grade, Mrs. Black gave me an F for a quiz. I was angry. I needed to learn how to read and study. This was my first F. I think it was either a math or a science quiz. It irritated me so much that I thought, this is the last F I will get. Since that time, I have never gotten an F again. Then, when I lived in Rancho Cucamonga, it was very challenging. I was given no leeway in school. The teacher would ride you. I did not want to do the homework, but I did. When I came to this school, the teachers would get to know you rather than putting you into a category. So, 7th grade was a review for me because Rancho was so hard. Plus, I did not have any friends. Also in 6th grade, it was so hard for me. This made me much better in the 7th grade. Now, in the eighth grade I have many friends and I like it here.*
Student Participant 2	*I failed most every math test in 6th grade. I was in an Algebra class in the 7th grade. I got help in the after school program and my grades went from an F to a C. It took me many weeks to do this. I wanted my life to be brighter. My life was changing and reality hit me. I started to do well. A counselor came to the house and my mom said, why are you doing this to me? So, I started doing well.*
Student Participant 3	*In the 6th grade, I would describe myself as not being happy. I am not sure, why? I wasn't motivated until my mom encouraged me. My mom said, "there is no going back. You need to start now, if you want to be a doctor. That woke me up. Mom did all she could for me. You have to know where you want to be to get there. Then in the 7th grade, I had a D. Later, through hard work, I turned that into an A and I ended up on the honor roll. It took me a year to get this. Now, in the eighth grade, I stay on the honor roll.*
Student Participant 4	*In the 6th grade, I was not doing well in school. So, I challenged myself to get A's and B's. Also, when I started playing football, I was not very good. Now, I am a better player than all of them.*
Student Participant 5	*In the 6th grade, I took a math test and I failed. I took a re-test. I studied and passed it with an A in math. Then in the 6th grade, I did not want to get held back. So, I studied harder. I did all of the homework and I paid attention in class. I continue to do this in the eighth grade.*
Student Participant 6	*I wanted to play football. I had to pass all of my classes. My coach would often yell at me to do my best. That pushed me and helped me a lot. During my first year in football, I knew nothing about it. I was an offensive lineman and from that experience, I got tougher.*

Note: Participant Personal Communications (March 2012)

Review of Trends and Themes

There were several trends and themes that were common amongst the student participants in detremining what has caused them to be academically successful and resilient immediately following academic failure. For example, the common characterisitcs or trends that were indicated were having clear goals, having positive relations with their teachers, having parents/caregivers take an active part in their education, being held to high academic standards and being involved in extra-curricular activites both in and out of school. The literature on the contributing factors of student academic success also supports these findings. In additon, one of the major factors that has contributed to their academic success and resiliency was their positive attitude and self-efficacy. All of the student participants felt a sense of urgency to complete all of the work assigned by their teachers both in and out of school. All of the student particpants were also motivated by their goals and knew that success in school is vital for them to reach their goals. Each of the student participants knew that they had what it took to be academically successful, and their resiliency was clearly demonstrated throughout the entire study. This process started in the sixth grade and continued through both seventh and eighth grades.

In addition, the trends and themes that emerged from this study also clearly indicated all of the contributing factors (home, school, and community support) and characteristics that have assisted these student particpants in acquiring and maintaining their individual academic success and resiliency.

These trends and themes were apparent in their daily lives and became evident during the course of the classroom observations, and were also evident in the responses that each of the student particpants gave during the course of the two focus group sessions, as well as during the the one-on-one interviews.

A common trend was having parents and caregivers that took an active part in their lives and who were concerned with their education. They also monitored their child's academic success and progress. In addition, each of the student particpants was extremely motivated to be academically successful. That was clearly demonstrated by their behavior during the classroom observations. The researcher also was able to observe their positive attitudes during the interviews, as well as during the two focus group sessions.

Each of the student particpants all had very specific goals. In addition, and all of them also had a proactive plan to reach those goals.   Each of the student particpants also had a positive attitude towards school and about their teachers. They viewed college as a means to obtain their goals. Each of the student participants could clearly see the value that education had in their lives, as well as the value it will have in determinng their futures.

Each of the student participants was academically successful. They were all very confident in their abilities to be successful. Each one of them exhibited high levels of resiliency and self-efficacy.

Finally, each one of the student particpants were involed in extra-curricluar activities both in and out of school. They all kept very busy and were active in

their school and in their community, and they all had a positive view of their school, their teachers, as well as their community.

Research Question 2

What did these student participants do in the classroom on a daily basis that directly contributed to their academic success and their resiliency?

Many research studies have identified the characteristics of resilient students, but never address what students are actually doing that makes the academically successful and resilient. The researcher conducted individual interviews, classroom observations and two focus group sessions of the student participants to address this specific question (Appendix H,I, J, K and M). Table 18 indicates speciifially what these student participants did in class that contributed to their resiliency.

All of the student participants had certain practices they did daily during each class that directly contributed to their academic success and their resiliency. All of the student participants had positive relationships with their teachers. In addition, they were all organized and used a binder, took notes, wrote things down to maintain order and remain informed about the class and what is expected of them. They asked many questions of the teacher concerning the material that was presented in class. In addition, they also focused on the teacher and blocked out the distractions that were taking place in the classroom. All of them were aware that by doing these daily practices, this is what has contributed to their success and their resiliency.

The literature review addressed several characteristics of resilient students. Table 18 indicates those characteristics and whether or not these student participants exhibited thsese resilient traits or not.   All 100% of the student participants exhibited all of these resilient traits.

Table 18. *Characteristics of Resilient Students.*

Characteristics	Student Participant 1	Student Participant 2	Student Participant 3	Student Participant 4	Student Participant 5	Student Participant 6
Adaptation to challenging situation	x	x	x	x	x	x
Positive use of time	x	x	x	x	x	x
Self-reliant	x	x	x	x	x	x
Positive Attitude	x	x	x	x	x	x
Responsible	x	x	x	x	x	x
Socially Skillful	x	x	x	x	x	x
Establish positive relationship with peers	x	x	x	x	x	x
Problem solving skills	x	x	x	x	x	x
Autonomy	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sense of purpose	x	x	x	x	x	x
Clear goals	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sports/extra curricular activities	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sense of trust	x	x	x	x	x	x
Very little free time	x	x	x	x	x	x

Table 19 indicates specifically aht each of these stduent participants did in the classroom that contributed to their acadmeic success, as well as their ongoing resiliency.

It is very clear from the student participants reponses as to exactly what they did in class that fostered their acadmeic success and their resiliency. For example, all of the stduents were organized through the use of notebooks and binders. They also write down information that was on the board, the blocked out the distractions from other students in the classroom who were off task, they asked many questons in class to the teacher, they paid attention to the teacher and indicated they all had good relationships with their teachers, and they spent a significant amount of time doing homework. Finally, they all completed the work that was assigned in class, as well as the homework that was given by the respective teachers.

The theoretical framework for this case study utilized Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). Within this theory, the individual, in this case, the student participants are viewed as developing within a complex system of relationships. The structures of this system are broken into 5 specific systems. The student participants interacted within all of these specific systems and were greatly influenced by each of them. For example, all of the student participants had positive relationships with their family members, the school and also did volunteer work in their community. This is reflective of Bronfenbrenner's microsystem.

Table 19. *Resiliency in Action.*

Participant	Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4
Student Participant 1	It is your fault if you are not successful. This is the last F, I will ever get.	I focus on the teacher.	I ask many questions in class, and I ignore the distractions.	I complete the required work, and I have a positive relationship with my teachers. I feel all of the things I do in class contributes to my resiliency.
Student Participant 2	I ask many questions in class.	I look at the board. I am organized by using dividers and a binder.	I maintain my focus and I ignore the other conversations. I feel this contributes to my resiliency.	I have a positive relationship with my teachers, and I spend 1 to 2 hours per subject per week doing homework and studying.
Student Participant 3	I ask many questions n class, and I pay attention to what the teacher is saying.	I block out others who are talking or disrupting the class.	I listen closely and I move closer to the teacher.	I spend about 30 minutes to one hour per class studying each night. All of these things have contributed to my resiliency.
Student Participant 4	I ask many questions in class. I also write things down to maintain order.	I section off my binder to stay organized.	I have a positive relationship with all of my teachers.	I typically spend about 15 minutes per night per class studying. All of the things I do in class have contributed to my resiliency.
Student Participant 5	I ask questions before class about the previous days work. I also ask many questions in class to my teachers. I write things down that are on the board.	I have positive relationships with all of my teachers.	I go home and I review the information again that was presented in class.	I attribute my resiliency to working hard, paying attention to my teachers, and communicating with my teachers.
Student Participant 6	I ask many questions in class. If I am not sure about something, I ask.	While I am in class, I am ready to multi-task. I can listen to the teacher and do my work at the same time.	After class, I try to summarize what I learned in class. My binder is organized for each class. I spend as much time on homework as is necessary.	I block out distractions. I view the teachers as people who can help me reach my goals. I have positive relationships with my teachers and I attribute my resiliency and success to my goals and plans for my life.

Note: Participant Personal Communications (March 2012)

Bronfenbrener's mesosystem identifies the connections that a child has within the school, the community and in one's own family. All of the student participants in this study had excellent relationships with their teachers, parents/family, and also did volunteer work in their community, and participated in extra-curricular activities both in and out of school.

All of the student participants indicated that their parents were actively involved in their lives, as well as their education even though they worked and had busy schedules. Bronfenbrenner (1979) calls this system the exosystem. All of the student participants were positively effected by the interactions they had with their parents and families.

All of the student participants indicated that their parents values and ethics of hard work and determination inspired all of them to do well in school and pursue their dreams for the future. Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem involves the customs, values and norms that are associated in one's family, as well as within the community.

This study addressed students who were failing in the sixth grade, but turned that around in the seventh grade and continued to be academically successful and resilient in the eighth grade. Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem indiactes that as children get older they will most likely react differently to environmental changes. He also indicates that they are better able to determine how these changes will effect and influence them in the future. All of the participants had a clear vision as to where they wanted to be in the future. By

having and maintaining speciifc goals for their future, they exhibited high levels of resiliency. In addition, each of the student participants were successfully able to adjust to their environments.

The responses indicated by the student participants identified specific practices each of them followed that contribued to their resiliency and academic success. All of the student participants developed and evolved over time as a result of the environmental systems that they were exposed to and involved in.

Summary of Resiliency

All six of the student participants illustrated all of the qualities of being resilient. For example, all of the student participants made wise use of their time both in and out of class through preparation, as well as what they did with their time while in class. The student participants wrote what was on the board, took notes, paid attention to the teacher and kept their binder organized. In addition, each student participant exhibited self-efficacy, and had the confidence that they could be successful.

During the course of the classroom observations conducted by the researcher, it was noted in the field notes that all of the participants were on task and clearly appeared to be engaged and focused on what the teacher was presenting in class.

In addition, they all had a positive view of their teachers and often spoke to them and asked many questions while in class. They came to class prepared, participated in class activities, and respected others. They all indicated that they had trusting and close relationships with their parents or caregivers, as well as their peers and teachers.

It was noted during the student participant interviews and through the questions asked during the two focus group sessions, that all of the student participants exhibited resilient qualities by making positive use of their time both in and out of school. In addition, they were more involved in school activities, as well as other activities, sports and extra-curricular activities. They tended to have very little free time.

Research Question 3

What are the strategies that schools use to foster resiliency specifically for students who have been able to move from academic failure to academic success during middle school?

Fostering Resiliency in Schools

The researcher conducted a follow up interview of the teachers and the counselor to gain specific insights as to what they felt schools can do to foster resiliency in middle school students (see Appendix N). Table 20 and Table 21 illustrates the teacher and counselor responses.

Table 20. *Responses from Teachers.*

Teacher	Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4
Teacher 1	Students need to be vested in their education.	If students are actively engaged in their small learning communities, and develop real and solid connections with other student's, they feel like they are a part of something.	Making the connections with teachers directly in a much smaller setting, students see that they can be successful and this improves their self-efficacy, as well as improving educational outcomes.	I feel small learning communities are the trend in education right now. So, I feel that schools need to fully develop them to foster resiliency.
Teacher 2	Schools can foster resiliency by making a place for everyone on campus by offering clubs activities, competitions, sports, academics and intramurals.	When students are connecting with adults more on campus, they are more likely to succeed.	Having structured events helps the students to discover their interests and abilities, and also helps staff members to get to know students on a deeper level. Rather than just trying to teach them and get them to behave.	They need to be useful and see their worth in society in order to become resilient, and academically successful. In addition, students need to have goals and aspirations to overcome setbacks in their lives.
Teacher 3	I feel that schools need some sort of a way to hold students accountable and be consistent with it. For example, the student binders need to get signed more often, and if it doesn't, the teachers could randomly call parents.	The random system could also work for discipline and any other areas of concern.	Another idea is to incorporate technology. We need to keep our parents informed because when we do, we get better results.	I feel much of their resiliency is intrinsic and they are motivated by making observations of other students.

Note: Participant Personal Communications (June 2012)

Table 21. *Responses from the Counselor*.

Counselor	Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4
Counselor 1	First, school counselors should be in every school. School counselors are trained to assist/foster academic success and resiliency. Counselors can often intervene before there are problems, both academically and socially.	Second, schools need to reach out to parents to become a proactive team for academic success and resiliency.	Third, as a united team progress may be made toward steering the student in the appropriate direction.	Finally, schools need to include the community in which the school is located. Career fairs provide students the opportunity to meet those in the community who may offer real world relevance to what students learn in school.

Note: Participant Personal Communications (June 2012)

The information obtained from the follow-up interviews of the three

teachers and the one counselor yielded a variety of opinions and

recommendations as to what schools can do to foster resiliency in students. It is

also reflective of what the student participants were already doing that

contributed to their resilience and their academic success. For example, teacher

2 indicated that by offering alternatives for student participation, this assists

students in building resiliency and capacity. This might include, being involved in

extra-curricular activities, clubs and sports. Students who participated in activities

both in and out of school were more likely to be and remain resilient (Peng & Lee,1992).

During the first focus group session, the student participants also indicated that they were active both in and out of school in various groups, clubs, sports and did volunteer work. In addition, students need to have goals and aspirations to overcome setbacks in their lives. For example, teacher 2 offered students choices to show them there are alternative solutions to issues and problems. Teacher 2 also shared her experiences to assist them in overcoming various obstacles to build capacity and resilience.

In another example, teacher 3 indicated that having parent involvement in their child's education is another manner to foster resiliency in students. Technology also plays an important role in that process by keeping parents informed of their child's progress on a regular basis by being able to access information about their child's grades at all times, and by having open lines of communication. This can assist parents in building close and trusting relationships with their child by being actively involved in their child's education and fully aware at all times of their grades in in each class. This is also reflected by the work conducted by Peng et al., (1992).

Teacher 1 indicated that having small learning communities and close working relationships with their teachers contributes to student resiliency and academic success. These activities could take place both in and out of the school setting. However, schools can assist students in becoming resilient by

offering various clubs, sports, and activities to keep students actively engaged and busy.

In order for a child to be/become resilient, they must learn that it is okay to fail, as long as, they are able to get back up and try it again. Resilience is important because it gives the learner the ability to strive for academic success.

A follow-up interview was also conducted by the researcher of the counselor to gain insights into what middle schools can do to assist students in becoming resilient and academically successful. It was interesting to observe this process from a counseling perspective.

The counselor indicated that schools could assist students in becoming resilient and academically successful by having more counselors on site. And by taking a proactive or preventative approach to issues and problems that might arise in a student's life. Having the support of the community, teachers, administrators and parents, all contributes to building resiliency in students. Finally, students need to have goals and a plan to achieve those goals. The counselor indicated, "I am their cheerleader and I use positive strategies and interventions" (Counselor, personal communications, June 2012).

Chapter Summary

As we can see from the responses of the teachers at the school site, as well as the counselor, there are numerous strategies that middle schools can implement to assist students in becoming resilient and successful.

For example, schools can offer various extra-curricular activities, clubs, small learning communicates, and sports, as well as encouraging students to be involved in volunteer work. By keeping students busy and fully engaged in school, this will assist students in becoming and remaining resilient.

In addition, schools can place a greater effort on preventative interventions by employing more counselors. Counselors can assist students in setting and maintaining their individual goals, as well as assisting students in the decision making process and being a solid advocate. As indicated by the responses from the student participants, all of them were involved in sports, clubs, volunteered and participated in extra-curricular activities both in and out of school. In addition, the student participants in this study also had very clear goals that motivated them to become academically successful, and at the same time, remain resilient.

Finally, middle schools can also assist students in becoming resilient by involving all constituents. These include having the support of the community, teachers, administrators and parents. In addition, schools can also use and implement technology to keep parents actively involved and updated as to how their child is performing in various subjects. Small learning communities are also

another strategy that middle schools can use to involve students in their education by fostering and developing close working relationships with their teachers. The student participants all indicated that they had positive relationships with their teachers. Computer technology also improves communication between the school, students, teachers and parents. Having and maintaining open lines of communications assists students in becoming resilient.

<center>Triangulation of the Data</center>

In qualitative research, validity refers to whether the findings of a particular study are true. The research findings should accurately reflect the situation or setting. Hammersley (1987) indicates that "an account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorize" (p. 69).

In addition, the research findings are clearly supported by the evidence. Triangulation is a method that is used by qualitative researchers to check and establish validity by examining a research question or questions from multiple perspectives (Patton, 2002). Patton identifies five types of triangulation:

1. Data triangulation

2. Investigator triangulation

3. Theory triangulation

4. Methodological triangulation

5. Environmental triangulation

It is a common misconception that the goal of triangulation is to arrive at consistency across data sources or approaches; in fact, such inconsistencies may be likely, given the relative strengths of different approaches. These inconsistencies should not be seen as weakening the evidence, but should be viewed as an opportunity to uncover deeper meaning in the data (Patton, 2002).

Patton indicates that data triangulation involves using different sources of information in order to increase the validity of a study. This involves various stakeholders. The researcher would compare stakeholder groups to determine areas of agreement and areas of disagreement. Patton indicates that this type of triangulation is the most popular because it is the easiest to implement.

Investigator triangulation involves using several different investigators in the analysis process. For example, each investigator examines the program with the same qualitative method (interview, observation, case study, or focus groups). The findings from each evaluator would then be compared to develop a broader and deeper understanding of how the different investigators view the issue. If the findings from the different evaluators arrive at the same conclusion, then our confidence in the findings would be heightened (Patton, 2002).

Theory triangulation involves the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data. This method typically entails using professionals outside of a particular field of study. Typically, people from different disciplines are used to

bring different perspectives. Therefore, if each evaluator from a different discipline interprets the information in the same way, then validity is established.

Methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative methods to study the program. For example, results from surveys, focus groups, and interviews could be compared to see if similar results are being found. If the conclusions from each of the methods are the same, then validity is established (Patton, 2002).

Environmental triangulation involves the use of different locations, settings and other key factors related to the environment in which the study took place, such as the time, day, or season. The key is identifying which environmental factors, if any, might influence the information that is received during the study. These environmental factors are changed to see if the findings are the same across settings. If the findings remain the same under varying environmental conditions, then validity has been established (Patton, 2002).

The researcher, in this study, used data triangulation in an attempt to establish validity. The researcher compared the responses given by the student participants to determine areas of agreement and areas of disagreement in their responses during the two focus group sessions, as well as during the one-on-one interviews. In addition, the researcher also wanted to verify if their behavior and academic performance during the classroom observations, focus groups and interviews was consistent. This was done to gain insights into specifically, what

these students were doing that contributed to their academic success and resiliency.

The theoretical framework for this case study used Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). Bronfenbrenner's theory suggests that an individual's development is responsive to the influence of several environmental systems. For example, the *microsystem* takes into consideration the family environment, as well as the community and the school environment. The individual interacts within all of those systems. In this case, the student is able to make connections within those environments or systems with their parents (see Theme 1, Table 11), the teachers, and within their neighborhood or community. And each student is affected by these systems either directly or indirectly. The student participants in this study all had excellent relationships with their parents, teachers and in the community.

Within Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979) is the *chronosystem*. This system allows a child to evolve over time. As a result, with age, they react differently to the environmental changes that they have been exposed to. These changes, in effect influence them, and will cause them to think differently about their situation or their circumstances.

This study reflects his theory, and it is evident that these student participants did change their opinions about the value of their education, and they could all see that education was the key to them attaining their goals for the future.

All of the student participants in this study were failing in the sixth grade, (see Theme 2, Table 11), but as they developed each of them changed in the seventh grade and started to do the necessary and required work that was asked of them by their teachers. As a result, they transitioned from being at-risk for academic failure to being academically successful. They continued that trend into the eighth grade. In addition, they exhibited high levels of resiliency and self-efficacy (see Theme 6, Table 11). In essence, they all evolved over time. In this study, they began to evolve or change in the seventh grade and continued to remain academically successful and resilient.

This change was evident by the responses given during the focus group sessions, the interviews and throughout the classroom observations. In addition, the researcher indicated specific field notes or jottings during the course of the 36 classroom observations. The researcher indicated that each of the participants took an active part in classroom activities, completed the assigned work as requested by the teacher, asked questions, took notes, was organized by using binders and folders, was well behaved and appeared to be actively engaged in the lesson that was presented by the respective teacher. Their answers, as well as their behavior was consistent over the course of this study, and was fully reflected by the answers provided by all of the student participants. All of the data that was collected clearly addressed and answered the specific research questions.

Bronfenbrenner's *mesosystem* is the connections a child makes between the structures of the child's microsystem. In this study, all of the student participants had close and trusting relationships with their teachers and were active in their communities (see Theme 5, Table 11).

Finally, Bronfenbrenner's *exosystem* and *macrosystem* take into consideration the larger social system, which includes an individual's parents, their community, one's values, customs and laws. It was evident that the six student participants were greatly influenced by these two systems. In that, they had close relationships with parents, teachers, and were actively involved in school and in their communities. This was clearly evident in theme 2 and theme 4, (see Table 11). All of the student participants were highly motivated by their parents, as well as by their goals and all of them were academically successful. These two systems assisted them in becoming and maintaining their academic success and their resiliency.

The researcher developed an uncaibrated scale (see Appendix N) to conduct the classroom observations. The scale was approved by the researchers dissertation committee. Typically, scales must conform to some type of dependable and known standards. These standards make measurements directly interpretable For example, a temperature of 20 degrees Celsius is interpretable because it is situated in between 0 degrees (water freezes) and 100 degrees (water boils), which are agree upon standards. By contrast, agreed upon standards are relatively rare in the social sciences. Most

social scientists are content to use un-calibrated measures, which simply show the positions of cases relative to each other. Un-calibrated measures, however, are clearly inferior to calibrated measures (Byrne, 2002).

In addition, the researcher used a diary to note the dates, times, and the subject matter of the 36 classroom observations. The diary did not assist the researcher in establishing triangulation. It was just used as a tool to stay informed as to what classes the students were observed in and at what times. The researcher indicated that the students performed well in all of their classes, regardless of time, period, teacher or subject matter.

However, based on Patton's five types of validity, the results of this study do not appear to be valid and cannot be generalized to various other social settings or environments. Within the context of this school site, the results appear to be valid. However, under different circumstances, with different demographics, the results might be much different. This study would need to be analyzed and replicated in various social settings and environments to verify its validity. In addition, because of the uniqueness of this study, the researcher was unable to compare the results of this study to other studies due to the focus of the three research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, INTERPRETATIONS

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The results of this case study clearly indicated what these six student participants did to transition from being at-risk for academic failure in the sixth grade to becoming academically successful in the seventh grade, and continuing that trend in the eighth grade. These student participants exhibited high levels of resiliency and self-efficacy. This study also demonstrated the influence that their family, the school and the community had on their academic success and resiliency. As the case study unfolded certain trends and themes emerged regarding their academic success and resiliency.

The results of this study indicate the factors that have contributed to the student participants' academic success and resiliency. It also demonstrates what the home environment, the school and the community can do to foster resiliency in students. The goal of the study was to identify what these student participants did that has contributed to their academic success and resiliency. The findings of this case study were guided by the three research questions:

1. What are the key characteristics that enable some middle school students to overcome numerous "at risk" factors and become academically successful immediately following academic failure?

2. What did these student participants do in the classroom on a daily basis that directly contributed to their academic success and their resiliency?

3. What are the strategies that schools use to foster resiliency specifically, for students who have been able to move from academic failure to academic success during middle school?

Summary of the Findings

The researcher used focus groups, interviews, classroom observations, a diary and field notes to extract and analyze data from these instruments to gain a clear perspective as to what these student participants were doing both in and out of school that contributed to their academic success and their resiliency. Data collected in this study was uploaded into ATLAS.ti qualitative software for chunking and coding, which resulted in six key trends: (1) involvement in extra-curricular activities in and out of school; (2) specific goals for their future; (3) having positive relationships with their parents and teachers; (4) being prepared for class; (5) completing the assigned homework; (6) the confidence and motivation to do well.

In addition to the six key trends, there were also six key themes that emerged as a result of examining the specific trends in detail. The first key theme is: (1) parents and caregivers; (2) motivation; (3) behavior; (4) attitude; (5)

goals/aspirations; (6) beliefs about college; (7) academic success; (8) resiliency; (9) extra-curricular activities.

Theme 1: Parents and Caregivers

All of the student participants reported that they had excellent relationships with their parents. All of the parents were actively involved in their child's education. In addition, they were all willing to assist these student participants with their homework and monitored what their child was doing in class. Their encouragement and support was one of the key factors in these student participants being academically successful and resilient.

Theme 2: Motivation/Behavior/Attitude

All of the student participants were highly motivated to do their best at all times. They all had very clear and specific goals and knew that their education was the key to obtaining those goals. All of the student participants had specific practices that motivated them to do well. For some, it was sports, for others it was to have a better life, others wanted to please their parents and all of them were motivated to be academically successful and wanted to attend college.

In addition, all of the student participants were prepared for class, listened to the teacher, completed the required homework, asked questions in class, blocked out distractions from other students, took notes, were well organized, and they all behaved well in class and had no discipline referrals.

Theme 3: Goals/Aspirations

One of the themes that were extremely evident was that all of the student participants had very clear and specific goals and aspirations and appeared to have a vision of how they would reach those goals. Their goals continued to motivate them on a daily basis. All of the student participants realized that in order to obtain their goals; they had to do well in school. Their goals greatly contributed to their academic success and resiliency.

All of the student participants could clearly see the value a college education has towards them obtaining their goals and having a bright and successful future. In addition, each of the student participants realized that the work they are currently doing in middle school was important to them obtaining their goals for the future. The student participants all had specific goals and aspirations and all of them knew exactly what they wanted to do and be in the future.

Theme 4: Academic Success

All of the student participants in this study, at one time, were at-risk for academic failure in the sixth grade, but were able to turn that around in the seventh grade, and continued to be academically successful and resilient in the eighth grade. The student participants were very focused and concerned about their education and did everything necessary to insure academic success. It was evident from the responses given during the interviews, focus group sessions and from the classroom observations that all of them went above and beyond

what was required of them in their classes. Each student participant actively

participated in class projects, discussions, completed all of the required work on

time, was well behaved, took notes, and maintained their organization through

the use of notebooks and binders. All of these practices greatly contributed to

their academic success.

Theme 5: Extra-curricular Activities

All of the student participants were involved in extra-curricular activities.

The student participants kept very busy and had very little free time. The student

participants were involved in a variety of activities both in and out of school.

Many of them were involved in sports, participated in volunteer work, and often

assisted their teachers at school.

There are numerous strategies that middle schools can implement to

assist students in becoming academically successful and resilient. For example,

as we can see from the responses of the student participants, they were actively

involved in various extra-curricular activities, sports, volunteer work, and active in

their school and their community. Middle schools can assist students in

becoming and remaining resilient by offering clubs, sports and encouraging them

to participate in their community.

Theme 6: Resiliency

All of the student participants exhibited a great deal of resiliency both prior

to this study, as well as during this study. This attribute was the main focus of

this study. The student participants identified specific events during sixth grade

that turned them around from failing academically to becoming academically successful and resilient. These events were the major turning point in their lives in terms of their academic success and their resiliency. Each of the student participants continued to remain academically successful and resilient both during their seventh and eighth grade years.

In addition, middle schools can place a greater effort on preventative interventions by employing more counselors. Counselors can assist students in setting and maintaining their individual goals, as well as assisting students in the decision making process and being a solid advocate.

Middle schools can also assist students to become resilient by involving all constituents. These include having the support of the community, teachers, administrators and parents. Schools can also use and implement technology to keep parents actively involved and informed about their child's grades in all of their classes. Based upon the responses given from the teachers and the counselor in this study, middle schools can implement small learning communities. This encourages close relationships with their teachers, which also fosters resiliency. As indicated by the student participant responses, they had positive relationships with their teachers. Computer technology is another tool schools can use to improve communications between the school, community, students, parents and teachers. All of these factors combined will greatly improve student resiliency, which will also improve educational outcomes.

Recommendations

The goal of this study was to identify what these six student participants did both in and out of school that has contributed to their academic success and resiliency. The trends and themes that emerged from this study can be used to assist educators and schools to assist other students in becoming academically successful and resilient. This study offers educators the opportunity to specifically identify what these students did in and out of school that contributed to them becoming academically successful, and at the same time remaining resilient. In addition, it is an excellent indicator as to the strategies these student participants have included in their practice to improve their educational outcomes. For example, all of the student participants were organized by using notebooks and binders. In addition, all of they paid attention to the teacher, wrote information that was on the board, completed the work in class that was assigned by the teacher, and also completed all of the assigned homework. These strategies could also be used to transform educational practices and outcomes for other students in similar situations.

For example, schools need to have open lines of communication with parents, the community, students and teachers. It is evident from the responses of the participants that fostering pro-active relationships with their teachers and parents greatly contributed to the student participants' success in the classroom. In addition, teaching students organizational skills, listening skills, and communications skills as part of the curriculum would also assist students in that

process. Offering various sports and extra-curricular activities both in and out of school offers students various alternatives to get actively involved in school and in their education. Technology is an important aspect of increasing the lines of communications between the school, community and the families that the schools serve. It is also important to teach students how to take notes and to write down information to maintain order and keep students well informed. Small learning communities offer schools an opportunity to bridge those communications gaps and to get students involved. When students feel involved and valued, they will take an active role in their education.

If students are interested in school, happy to come to school, and see value in what they are doing and learning, the educational outcomes will improve for all students in similar situations.

Limitations

The data collected during this case study relied primarily on the truthfulness of the answers that were provided by all of the participants during their interview, the focus group sessions and their performance during the classroom observations. It was assumed, by the researcher, that the answers given by all of the participants has been authentic and that their responses honestly reflects their attitudes and opinions as to what has contributed to their

academic success and their resiliency. The study was also limited by the

availability of the participants, as well as the time allotted for the data collection.

The dissertation committee decided that the focus of this study should be

on students who were at-risk for academic failure in the sixth grade, but turned

that around in the seventh grade, and continued that trend into the eighth grade.

The researcher collected and analyzed data that was relevant to the three

research questions.

The results and findings of this study were limited to the select population

within this middle school and possibly to schools with similar demographics and

characteristics. However, the results of this study may not be generalizable to

middle schools that are not similar to this research site. Qualitative work by its

very definition is not directed toward generalizability and breadth, but rather

toward a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon.

From the data, the researcher was able to identify the strategies that these

students used to remain academically successful and resilient. These strategies

were noted during the classroom observations. The researcher made field notes

of exactly what these student participants were doing in the classroom that

contributed to their academic success, which also fostered their resiliency. For

example, it was noted that all of the participants were engaged in the lesson,

took notes, asked questions to the teacher and completed the assigned work by

the respective teacher. In addition, the data reveals what resiliency actually looks

like in action at a middle school. Now that these insights have been identified,

middle schools can replicate these strategies to assist other students in similar situations.

However, although the study identified various strategies, the results might have been different if more students had been included in the study. Plus, the study was also limited in scope due to the fact that all six of the participants were Hispanic and one was a mix of Caucasian and Hispanic. In addition, the study would have yielded richer data if the student participants would have been able to voice their opinions as to what they thought teachers, counselors and administrators could do to build resiliency amongst students. As a result, the researcher was not able to thoroughly address research question three. However, it is evident from the data that these six student participants were able to build resiliency from the practices they did both in and out of the classroom. It is also evident from the data that each of the student participants was able to determine what contributed to their academic success. In addition, each of the student participants was also able to figure out how to be resilient. It was also evident that each of these student participants also saw their world through their own personal lens. They had specific things that motivated them to become and remain academically successful and resilient. The results might have been different if other students from varying racial, ethnic, and demographic groups would have been included in this study.

Future Research

This study revealed the practices of academically successful and resilient students at a middle school in southern, California. Although several trends and themes emerged as a result of this study; these findings are limited in scope due to the demographics of these participants.

Many other middle schools with similar demographics can benefit from the strategies used by these academically successful and resilient students. However, there is still a need for future research. For example, an experimental or quasi-experimental approach could be used to determine whether the results, trends and themes described in this study would have similar results with students from varying ethnic, racial and social backgrounds. From this approach, data could be collected and analyzed to determine if these trends, themes and practices are common and consistent amongst diverse ethnic, racial and social groups. Researchers could also address specifically, what elementary, high school, and college students do that contributes to their academic success and resiliency. Therefore, educators as well as researchers could gain valuable insights as to specifically, what students do at all educational levels that contribute to their academic and resiliency. Now that these specific strategies have been identified, they could be used to completely transform educational practices and outcomes for all students, no matter what their background.

Conclusion

Many researchers have focused on the characteristics of academically successful and resilient student, but have not addressed specifically, what students' do that makes them academically successful and resilient. The results of this study have clearly demonstrated exactly what these student participants did that has contributed to their academic success and resiliency.

Several important factors have been identified that have contributed to these middle school students being academically successful and resilient. They include: a positive attitude about school, clear goals and aspirations, their beliefs about college and how college is the key to them reaching their goals, achieving academic success and maintaining that success, a problem solver and resilient, involved in extra-curricular activities, having supportive parents/caregivers that take an interest in their education, being focused and motivated to do well in and out of school and exhibiting positive behavior at school.

In addition to these attributes, all of the student participants also had positive relationships with their teachers, were actively engaged in their classes, were well organized, took notes and wrote things down that were indicated on the board, completed all of the assigned work requested by their respective teachers, asked many questions in class, and had the confidence that they could be successful.

Now that these characteristics and attributes have been clearly identified, educators can utilize this information to assist other students in similar situations

to become academically successful, which could also foster resiliency in students. Middle schools could also utilize these findings to cultivate a community of learners who are actively involved in their education, and the various activities that take place in and out of school. In addition, middle schools could also have open lines of communications with all stakeholders.

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER

Academic Affairs

Office of Academic Research • *Institutional Review Board*

December 02, 2011

Mr. Mark Norris
c/o: Prof. Michael Verdi
Department of Educational Leadership
California State University
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Full Board Review
IRB# 11027
Status
APPROVED

Dear Mr. Norris:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "At Risk Students and Resilency" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The attached informed consent document has been stamped and signed by the IRB chairperson. All subsequent copies used must be this officially approved version. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. **Your application is approved for one year from December 02, 2011 through December 01, 2012. One month prior to the approval end date you need to file for a renewal if you have not completed your research. See additional requirements (Items 1 – 4) of your approval below.**
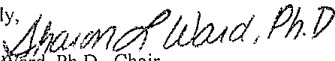
Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the <u>Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46</u> listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

1) Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are made in your research prospectus/protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research.
2) If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,
3) Too renew your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,
4) When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Coordinator/Compliance Analyst.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, IRB Compliance Coordinator. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Sharon Ward, Ph.D

Sharon Ward, Ph.D., Chair
Institutional Review Board

SW/mg

cc: Prof. Michael Verdi, Department of Educational Leadership

909.537.7588 • fax: 909.537.7028 • http://irb.csusb.edu/
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

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APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

PARENT PERMISSION LETTER FOR CHILD

Parent Permission Letter for their Child

Date:

Dear Parent:

I am from the College of Education at California State University, San Bernardino, and I would like to include your child, along with about 4 or 5 of his or her classmates, in a research project on resiliency. The study will examine students who were "at risk" for academic failure in the sixth grade, but somehow turned that around in the seventh grade and are now academically successful and resilient, and who also continued that trend in the eighth grade.

 If your child decides to participate in this research project, I will meet with him or her once a month for about seven months. The meetings will last approximately 15 to 30 minutes and will take place either before, during, or after school hours. The research will start during the 2011/2012-school calendar year in September of 2011, and it will continue until the end of March of 2012.

Your child will be interviewed, observed in the classroom, and attend two focus group sessions about his or her experiences at school, and at home, as that relates to his or her education. The data will be kept confidential and will be used to improve educational outcomes for other children in similar academic situations. The risks include volunteering some time over the seven-month period.

Your child's participation in this project is completely voluntary. In addition to your permission, your child will also be asked if he or she would like to take part in this project. Only those children who have parental permission and who want to participate will do so, and any child may stop taking part at any time. You are free to withdraw your permission for your child's participation at any time and for any reason without penalty. These decisions will have no affect on your future relationship with the school, the school district, or your child's status or grades there.

The information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of your child's school record. The data will be locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's home, in a locked room, and any identifying information will be coded to protect the participant. Any sharing or publication of the research results will not identify any of the participants by name.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you do or do not want your child to participate in this project and return this permission letter to Mr. Norris on or before October 1, 2011. Please keep the second copy of this form for your records. Please note that if you provide your permission for your child to participate in this study, it does not guarantee that he or she will be selected. Once all of the parent permission

forms have been received, the researcher will randomly select 4 or 5 students to participate in this study.

The benefits are for the researcher to be able to identify positive academic strategies that create an atmosphere of success and one that fosters resiliency in adolescent students.

Food and drinks will also be provided at the focus group meetings. In addition, a $75.00 gift card to Target will also be given to the participants, teachers, and counselors who complete this project as a reward for their time and effort.

I will be working under the direction of Dr. Michael Verdi and Dr. Donna Schnorr at California State University, San Bernardino. If you have any questions about this project, please contact us using the information below. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in research involving human subjects, please feel free to contact the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office at (909) 537-7588. You are welcome to call these numbers collect if you identify yourself as a research participant.

Please keep the attached copy of this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Mark Norris
Researcher/Doctorate Student   Dr. Michael Verdi/Professor/Chair
(818) 601-2827   (909) 537-5606
mnorris123@att.net   mverdi@csusb.edu

Dr. Donna Schnorr/Professor/Co-Chair
(909) 537-7313
dschnorr@csusb.edu

∎∎

I do/do not (circle one) give permission for my child (name of child) to participate in the research project described above.

Please print your child's name here: _____

_____
(Print) Parent's name

_____   _____
Parent's signature   Date

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

PARENT LETTER FOR NON-PARTICIPANT STUDENTS

Parent Letter for Non-Participating Students

Date:

Dear Parent:

I am from the College of Education at California State University, San Bernardino, and I would like to conduct a research project on resiliency. The study will examine students who were "at risk" for academic failure in the sixth grade, but somehow turned that around in the seventh grade and are now academically successful and resilient, and who also continued that trend in the eighth grade.

I will be observing the research participants in the classroom. Your child is in this classroom that I will be observing, but your child is not in the actual study. This will have no effect or impact on your child, or his or her education, or status at the school site. I will just be observing the research participants in their natural classroom environment.

If you grant me your permission to observe the research participants in your child's classroom, I ask that you please sign this permission form and have your child return it to me within one week. You are free to withdraw your permission at any time and for any reason without penalty. These decisions will have no affect on your future relationship with the school, the school district, or your child's status or grades there.

The information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of your child's school record. The data will be locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's home, in a locked room, and any identifying information will be coded to protect the participant. Any sharing or publication of the research results will not identify any of the participants by name.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you do or do not want your child to participate in this project and return this permission letter to Mr. Norris on or before October 1, 2011. Please keep the second copy of this form for your records.

The benefits are for the researcher to be able to identify positive academic strategies that create an atmosphere of success and one that fosters resiliency in adolescent students.

I will be working under the direction of Dr. Michael Verdi and Dr. Donna Schnorr at California State University, San Bernardino. If you have any questions about this project, please contact us using the information below. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in research involving human subjects, please feel free to contact the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Office at (909) 537-7588. You are welcome to call these numbers collect if you identify yourself as a research participant.

Please keep the attached copy of this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Mark Norris
Researcher/Doctorate Student   Dr. Michael Verdi/Professor/Chair
(818) 601-2827   (909) 537-5606
mnorris123@att.net   mverdi@csusb.edu

Dr. Donna Schnorr/Professor/Co-Chair
(909) 537-7313
dschnorr@csusb.edu

I do/do not (circle one) give permission for my child (name of child) to participate in the research project described above.

Please print your child's name here: _____

_____
(Print) Parent's name

Parent's signature   Date

APPENDIX D

TEACHER/COUNSELOR INFORMED CONSENT

Teacher/Counselor Informed Consent

Date:

Dear Teacher:

I am from the College of Education at California State University, San Bernardino, and I would like to include you in a research project on student resiliency. The study will examine students who were "at risk" for academic failure in the sixth grade, but somehow turned that around in the seventh grade and are now academically successful and resilient, and who also continued that trend in the eighth grade.

If you decide to participate in this research project, we will meet once a month for about seven months beginning in September of 2011 and continuing through March of 2012. In addition, students who have been selected for this study will be observed in the classroom once per month for a seven-month period beginning in September of 2011 to be completed by March of 2012. In addition, you and the students will be interviewed to add focus throughout the study. There will also be two focus group meetings, one at the beginning of the research study and one at the end of the research study. You and the students will be interviewed to provide focus throughout the study to gain more information on the nature of resiliency and academic success. The meetings will be at mutually convenient times for all parties before, during, or after school hours.

You will be interviewed about your experiences in the classroom as a teacher/counselor who has observed and taught students that were once "at risk" for academic failure, but are now academically successful. The data will be kept confidential and will be used to improve educational outcomes for other children in similar academic situations. The risks are minimal and include sacrificing time over the seven-month period.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. The participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty at all from me, the school, or the school district. All of the data will be secured in a locked file cabinet, in a locked room, in the researcher's home, and the identities of the participants will be protected by coding of the data.

The information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of your personnel file and record. Any sharing or publication of the research results will not identify any of the participants by name.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you want to participate in this project and return this signed letter before September 1, 2011 to Mr. Norris. Please keep the second copy of this form for your records.

The benefits are for the researcher to be able to identify positive academic strategies that create an atmosphere of success and one that fosters resiliency in adolescent students. This should help to increase graduation rates and decrease dropout rates.

Food and drinks will also be provided at the focus meetings. In addition, a $75.00 gift card to Target will also be given to the participants, teachers, and counselors who complete this project as a reward for their time and effort.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me, or one of my co-chairs listed below. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in research involving human subjects, please feel free to contact the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office at (909) 537-7588. You are welcome to call these numbers collect if you identify yourself as a research participant.

Please keep the attached copy of this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Mark Norris
Researcher/Doctorate Student   Dr. Michael Verdi/Professor/Chair
(818) 601-2827   (909) 537-5606
mnorris123@att.net   mverdi@csusb.edu

Dr. Donna Schnorr/Professor/Co-Chair
(909) 537-7313
dschnorr@csusb.edu

....

I do/do not (circle one) give my consent to participate in the research project.

_____
(Print) Teacher's/Counselor's Name

_____
Teachers/Counselors signature   Date

APPENDIX E

DISTRICT OFFICE PERMISSION LETTER

District Office Permission Letter

Date:

Dear Superintendent:

I am from the College of Education at California State University, San Bernardino, and I would like your permission to complete a doctoral dissertation project on resiliency at the Mesa Linda Middle School. The research project is on academic resiliency. The study will examine students who were "at risk" for academic failure in the sixth grade, but somehow turned that around in the seventh grade and are now academically successful and resilient, and who also continued that trend in the eighth grade.

If you grant your permission for me to conduct my research on this project, I will need to meet once a month with the participants for about seven months. The meetings will take place at a mutually convenient time for all parties concerned, and they will take place before, during, or after school hours.

The participants will include teachers, counselors, and students. They will be interviewed, observed in the classroom, and participate in two focus group sessions about their experiences as students who were once "at risk" for academic failure but are now academically successful and resilient. The data will be kept confidential and will be used to improve educational outcomes for other children in similar academic situations. The risks include sacrificing some time over the seven-month period.

The participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty at all from me, the school, or the school district. All of the data will be secured in a locked file cabinet, in a locked room, in the researcher's home, and the identities of the participants will be protected by coding of the data.

The information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of a participant's record or personal file. Any sharing or publication of the research results will not identify any of the participants by name. The research will start during the 2011/2012-school calendar year in September of 2011 and it will continue until the end of March of 2012.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you are granting me permission to conduct my research within the school district. Please sign and return this letter before September 1, 2011. Please keep the second copy of this form for your records.

The benefits are for the researcher to be able to identify positive academic strategies that create an atmosphere of success and one that fosters resiliency in adolescent students, which should increase graduation rates and decrease dropout rates.

Food and drinks will also be provided at the focus group meetings. In addition, a $75.00 gift card to Target will also be given to the participants, teachers, and counselors who complete this project as a reward for their time and effort.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me, or one of my co-chairs using the information below. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in research involving human subjects, please feel free to contact the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office at (909) 537-7588. You are welcome to call these numbers collect if you identify yourself as a research participant.

Please keep the attached copy of this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Mark Norris
Researcher/Doctorate Student   Dr. Michael Verdi/ Professor/Chair
(818) 601-2827   (909) 537-5606
mnorris123@att.net   mverdi@csusb.edu

Dr. Donna Schnorr/Professor/Co-Chair
(909) 537-7313
dschnorr@csusb.edu

I do/do not give my consent to the researcher to conduct the research at Columbia Middle School

Administrator's name_____

Administrator's signature_____

Date_____

APPENDIX F

PRINCIPAL PERMISSION LETTER

Principal Permission Letter

Date:

Dear Principal:

I am from the College of Education at California State University, San Bernardino and I would like to include you in a research project on resiliency. The study will examine students who were "at risk" for academic failure in the sixth grade, but somehow turned that around in the seventh grade and are now academically successful and resilient, and who also continued that trend in the eighth grade.

If you decide to participate in this research project, we will meet once a month for about seven months. The meetings will take place either, before, during or after school. The meetings will also be at a time that is mutually convenient for all parties concerned.

The participants will be interviewed, observed in the classroom, and take part in two focus group sessions. The study will focus on students who were once at risk for academic failure but are now academically successful. The data will be kept confidential and will be used to improve educational outcomes for other children in similar academic situations. The risks include sacrificing time over the seven-month period.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. The participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty at all from me, the school, or the school district. All of the data will be secured in a locked file cabinet, in a locked room, in the researcher's home, and the identities of the participants will be protected by coding of the data.

The information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of your personnel file and record. Any sharing or publication of the research results will not identify any of the participants by name. The research will start during the 2011/2012-school calendar year in September of 2011, and it will continue until the end of March of 2012.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you want to participate in this project and return this signed letter before September 1, 2011. Please keep the second copy of this form for your records.

The benefits are for the researcher to be able to identify positive academic strategies that create an atmosphere of success and one that fosters resiliency in adolescent students.

Food and drinks will also be provided at the focus meetings. In addition, a $75.00 gift card to Target will also be given to the participants, teachers, and counselors who complete this project as a reward for their time and effort.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me using the information below. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in research involving human subjects, please feel free to contact the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office at (909) 537-7588. You are welcome to call these numbers collect if you identify yourself as a research participant.

Please keep the attached copy of this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Mark Norris
Researcher/Doctorate Student   Dr. Michael Verdi/ Professor/Chair
(818) 601-2827   (909) 537-5606
mnorris123@att.net   mverdi@csusb.edu

Dr. Donna Schnorr/Professor/Co-Chair
(909) 537-7313
dschnorr@csusb.edu

▪▪

I do/do not (circle one) give my consent to participate in the research project.

_____
(Print) Principal's name

                                      _____
Principal's signature   Date

APPENDIX G

CRITERIA SELECTION FOR STUDENTS

WITH AT RISK BEHAVIORS

Criteria for selecting students with "At Risk" behaviors in the sixth grade during the 2009/2010 school calendar year.

<u>Instructions</u>:

We define at risk as being either male or female who have the probability to either fail academically or drop out of school. With that definition in mind, there are also certain risk factors that place a student academically at risk. Please identify those students who, during their sixth grade academic year 2009/2010, met two or more academic at-risk behaviors, and who also had two or more non-school "risk" factors based on what you knew about the student at that time.

<u>The identifiers include</u>:

Academic Risk Behaviors:

-Failing two or more courses
-Poor attendance
-Absenteeism at school
-Behavioral issues at school
-Avergae grades of C or lower from first to sixth grades
-Having to repeat a grade
-Suspensions
-Poor social or communications skills with adults and peers

Non School Risk Factors:

-High crime neighborhoods (violence and drugs)
-Single parent homes
-Lack of Parental monitoring
-Lack of Parental bond
-Poor Self-regulation
-Poor Goal setting and attainment
-Minority status
-Mother's education (high school graduation or less)
-Living below the poverty level
-Unemployment in the family
-Little to no support systems
-Abandonment
-Neglect
-Emotionally or physically abused
-Limited proficiency in English
-Having negative contact with police agencies
-Having negative role models at home or in the community

-Lack of structure and rules in the family
-Lack of community support
-Teen pregnancy
-Parent or guardian in prison
-Having older siblings drop out of school
-Teenage moms

Please use this criteria when recommending or selecting students.

APPENDIX H

CRITERIA SELECTION FOR STUDENTS

WITH RESILIENT BEHAVIORS

Criteria for selecting students with resilient behaviors in the seventh grade during the 2010/2011 school calendar year (from the list of at-risk students generated previously).

Instructions:

We define resiliency as a process in which individuals overcome hardship to create and sustain lives that are meaningful and successful. With that definition in mind, there are also certain resiliency factors that can be used to identify students who exhibit resiliency. Out of those that were identifed in the sixth grade as being at risk using the criteria above, please identify those who demonstrated resilient traits in the seventh grade during the school calendar year 2010/2011 using the criteria below.

The resiliency factors include:

School related resilient behaviors

-Higher academic scores
-From failing in sixth grade to passing in seventh grade
-Involvement in extra curricular activities
-Having positive role models in school
-Positive social or communication skills in school
-Engagement in school
-Good attendance
-Connection or a bond with a caring adult at school

Please use this criteria when recommending or selecting students

APPENDIX I

TEACHER AND COUNSELOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher and Counselor Interview Questions

1. What does academic success mean to you?

2. What do you feel motivates a student to be academically successful?

3. What do you feel makes a student successful?

4. How does a student's behavior influence their academic success?

5. Are there certain traits that you have noticed in students that create an atmosphere of success?

6. What do you do, specifically, to support a student's academic success?

7. When looking at the specific list of students you identified from risk to resiliency, what would you describe as the reasons for the transition?

APPENDIX J

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student Interview Questions

1. What does academic success mean to you?

2. What is the value of education to you?

3. What does it mean to be motivated?

4. What is currently motivating you to do well in school?

5. Can you give me an example of when you were motivated?

6. What are your plans for the future?

7. How does your current performance in school relate to your future plans after you graduate from school, if at all?

8. Why do you feel people choose to go to college?

9. Do you want to go to college? If so, why? If not, why not?

10. What do you think it takes to go to college?

11. Do you feel having a college degree is valuable? If so, why? If not, why not?

12. Where do you see yourself five to ten years from now?

13. Can you tell me about a time when you failed at something and then later turned that into a positive experience?

14. How would you describe the reasons why you went from being academically at risk for failure in the sixth grade to becoming academically successful in the seventh grade?

APPENDIX K

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

SESSION 1

Focus Group Questions/Session 1

1. What do you think has contributed to your academic success?

2. Are there specific things you do to prepare yourself for a class? If so, exactly what are they?

3. What caused you to change and go from failing in the 6th grade to being academically successful in the seventh grade?

4. How has the school or a teacher contributed to your academic success, if at all?

5. Who has helped contribute to your academic succes, if anyone at all? In what way have they contributed?

6. Are you involved in any extra curricular activities at school or outside of school? If so, describe what they mean to you.

7. Does your parent/parents or caregiver assist you at home with your studies? If so, describe how.

8. How much time per week do you spend studying for each class?

9. You have been identified as a student who was not performing well in school in the sixth grade, but who turned that around and began to perform well in school in the seventh grade. In your own words, how did that happen?

APPENDIX L

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

SESSION 2

Focus Group Questions/ Session 2

1. I noticed that you ask many questions in class. How does the manner in which you participate in class assist you in your learning?

2. Describe in detail what you do in class, before class, and after class, that assists you throughout the learnng process?

3. In your own words describe how you plan, how you organize and how you focus on the agenda or school related tasks on a daily basis?

4. Describe how you think about and handle distractions in the classroom. Do you maintain your focus in the classroom when others are off task and, if so, how do you do that?

5. How do you view your teachers? Do you have a positive relationship with them? How often do you talk to your teachers?

6. How have you been able to maintain your academic success from 7th to 8th grade?

7. Typically, how much time do you spend on homework in each class?

APPENDIX M

RESEARCH TIMELINE

Research Timeline

December, 2011   Obtain IRB Board approval

December, 2011   Obtain signed consent letters from teachers and the
                        counselor (see Appendix D)

December, 2011   Review the teacher and counselor recommendations
                        based on a set Criteria (see Appenendix F and G).

January, 2012   Send parent permission letters out based on
                        recommendations (see Appendix B and C).

January, 2012   Receive parent permission letters back

January, 2012   Check student cumulative files upon parental, district
                        and principal permisison (see Appendix B, E and F).
                        Select 6 student participants (see Appendix F & G)

February, 2012   First focus group meeting (see Appendix K).

February, 2012   Classroom observations conducted by the
to May, 2012   researcher(see Appendix N).

March, 2012   Audio taped interviews of the 6 student participants,
to April, 2012   the 3 teacher's and the counselor

May, 2012   Last focus group meeting (see Appendix L).

June, 2012   Coding of the data and data analysis utilizing ATLAS.ti
                        software

June, 2013   Follow-up interview of the teachers and the counselor

APPENDIX N

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM

Classroom Observations

Classroom Observation Form   _____

Class:_____   Date of Observation:_____
Observer:_____

Scale: 1   2   3   4   5
Not Demonstrated   Needs Improvement   Satisfactory   Outstanding N/A

Educational Climate for Learning:

    1.Is the student interested and enthuastic?
          1   2   3   4   5

    2.Is the atmosphere of the classroom participative?
          1   2   3   4   5

    3.Is the student taking notes in class?
          1   2   3   4   5

    4.Is the student participating in class activities?
          1   2   3   4   5

Preparation for the Class Session:

    5.Does the student know what preparation (reading or other assignments)
    that should have been completed prior to class?
          1   2   3   4   5

    6.Does the student ask questions in class?
          1   2   3   4   5

    7.Is the student behaving well in class?
          1   2   3   4   5

    8.Is the student listening to the instructor or are they not paying attention?

    9.Does the student ask questions in class pertaining to the topic?
          1   2   3   4   5

    10.Does the student complete the in class assignment?
          1   2   3   4   5

11. Were the key points emphasized?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

12. Were explanations clear to students?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

13. Does the student have the appropriate material such as pencils, pen and paper?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Learning Difficulties:

14. Does the student need assistance for a temporary or permanent disability?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

15. Are one of more students not motivated or unable to follow the class.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

16. Are students able to see any visual aids?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Additional Comments:

APPENDIX O

FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FOR TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS

Follow up Interview of the Teachers and Counselor

1. What do you feel makes students academically successful and resilient? Do you think a student must have both? What role do you think you might play in students' academic success?

2. How do you address students that are not engaged and not academically successful?

3. How do you know that students have learned what you have taught them?

4. How important do you feel behavior is towards a student's academic success?

5. In your opinion, how do you feel a student's attitude contributes to their academic success?

6. How do "students" see the value in what they are learning?

7. When you see a student that has gone from being academically unsuccessful to academically successful, what do you believe has impacted that change?

8. Specifically, what do you feel schools can do to assist students in becoming resilient and academically successful?

9. How can schools foster resiliency?

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