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New Student Adjustment: A Group Experience for High School Students

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Abstract

A study was completed in a high school using all of the new students in grades 9-12 to evaluate whether a group for new students would have an effect on connectedness and GPA. A pre-group survey was administered to all new students, and they were asked to rate on a scale from 1-5 how strongly they agreed or disagreed with four statements. They were also asked if they would like to participate in a group for new students. Students were separated into two groups, those who chose to participate in the group and those who chose not to participate in the group. Eight group sessions were held, and a post-group survey was administered to all of the new students after the group sessions had ended. Pre and post survey results, along with pre and post GPA were compared for each group separately to evaluate for change and then the groups' results were compared with each other. Pre and post survey results revealed an increase in scores for three out of the four statements for the group that participated in the new student group. The results for students who did not participate in the group revealed a decrease in scores for all four statements. Both groups had an increase from pre to post GPA.

New Student Adjustment: A Group Experience for High School Students

Effects of student mobility can affect various aspects of a student's life. Research has documented the numerous negative effects mobility can have on a student including social difficulties, difficulties with academics, adjustment, and even psychological problems such as stress, anxiety, and even depression. Demographics such as race, socioeconomic status, family composition, and the education level of a family can all effect how well a student adjusts after a move.

The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not a group for new students would increase connectedness and GPA. A pre and post survey measured connectedness. The results of the pre and post survey along with pre and post GPA were evaluated for change within each group and then the two groups' results were compared. The assumption was that the scores on the survey and GPA would increase for the students who participated in the group.

Review of the Literature

Mobility itself was examined. It was defined, and rates of mobility were discussed. Populations most likely to be mobile were identified along with reasons for mobility. The role of family composition as well as family socioeconomic status (SES) in mobility was discussed, and residential mobility was distinguished from school mobility. Transitions were discussed as well as adjustment of new students. Factors affecting adjustment were identified as well as students who seem to have an easier time with adjustment and those most at risk for problems with adjustment. Social aspects of student mobility were discussed including how mobility affects student friendships and

the difficulties new students face when attempting to make new friends. Connectedness was examined; the role the new school plays in connectedness as well as school conditions that can enhance connectedness. The effects of mobility on academic achievement were addressed as well as possible solutions, and steps schools and families can take to ease the negative effects of mobility on students.

Mobility

The concern over student mobility in K-12 schools has increased over the past several years (Demie, 2002). Rumberger (2002) defined student mobility as "students moving from one school to another for reasons other than being promoted to the next school level" (p. 1). Demie (2002) defined mobility as "a child joining a school at a point other than at the start of the key stage" (p. 199).

The United States has become a much more mobile society due to job relocation, career changes, divorce, and remarriage (Strother & Harvill, 1986). The United States has a mobility rate twice that of Great Britain and Germany (Wood, Halfon, Scarlata, Newacheck & Nessim, 1993). Approximately 17% of American families relocate each year (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). According to Blakeman (1993), one out of every five families makes a move requiring a change of residence. This affects approximately eight million school-aged children. The 2000 US census reported that 15-18% of school-age children had moved the previous year (Schater, 2001).

School mobility and residential mobility are not synonymous (Rumberger & Larson, 1998). In a study done by Rumberger and Larson, over a quarter of the high school students studied made a nonpromotional school change between the eighth and

twelfth grades. During the same study, over a third of the students reported changing residences during this time period (Rumberger & Larson).

Younger children tend to have a higher mobility rate than older children; however, the mobility rate does increase slightly between the ages of 15-19 (Ligon & Paredes, 1992). Families with school-aged children move less than families without school-aged children (Straits, 1987). Parents with school-age children generally attempt to maintain residential stability (Brown & Orthner, 1990). Cornille, Bayer, and Smyth (1983), found that families who have school-age children are quite likely to be mobile.

There is a higher mobility rate in secondary students than primary students (Demie, 2002). A number of high school students change schools, about 29% move between grades 8 and 10, and 24% change between grades 10 and 12 (Swanson & Schneider, 1999).

Rumberger and Larson (1998) found that students attending an urban, a Catholic, or a private school in eighth grade were more likely to change schools. Urban students were at a 50% increased risk of dropping out of school compared to students attending schools in suburban or rural areas (Rumberger & Larson). Students who attended a non-Catholic private school were 50% less likely to drop out of school compared to students in a public school (Rumberger & Larson). There was no difference found in the likelihood of students dropping out who attended public schools or Catholic schools (Rumberger & Larson).

Children from all economic backgrounds are mobile (Miller & Cherry, 1991). Family instability and the lack of sufficient low income housing often times can lead to residential mobility (Kerbow, 1996). Rumberger and Larson (1998) found that black,

Latino, Native American, and poor students had a higher mobility rate than Asian, white, and middle and high-income students. Poor children were more likely to be mobile and to have had problems in school, which could have been a result of other underlying problems with the family related to poverty (Rumberger & Larson).

Rumberger and Larson (1998) found a higher school and residential mobility rate among students from the lower social class, 31% of students from the lowest SES quartile, compared to 25% of students in the highest SES quartile changed schools and 43% of students from the lowest SES compared to 25% of students in the highest SES quartile changed residences. This put low SES students at a disadvantage because they were more likely than high SES students to change both schools and residences (Rumberger & Larson).

Simpson and Fowler (1994) found that older children and poor children were more likely to have moved compared to younger children and children from higher income families. White students and students from families with both mother and father present were more stable than those of other races and from other family configurations (Kerbow, 1996). Poor families move 50% to 100% more often than families who are not poor (Wood et al., 1993). Sometimes poor and minority families are forced to move due to eviction, economic hardship and racism (Wood et al., 1993). Poor families may move frequently to take advantage of rent specials at apartment complexes (Mao, Whitsett, & Mellor, 1998).

Patterns of mobility vary by social class (Rumberger & Larson, 1998). Social mobility often accompanies residential mobility (Medway, 1995). Families can move in an upward direction to a bigger and more expensive house while other families are forced

to move in a downward direction due to financial difficulties (Medway, 1995).

Sometimes families are required to move for career advancement (Brown & Orthner,

1990). Middle-class families are less likely to make local moves (Lacey & Blane, 1979).

Families with more education are more likely to make interstate moves (Ingersoll,

Scamman, & Eckerling, 1989).   Adolescents appear to adapt quite easily after a family

relocation if it is the result of a parental career demand (Brown & Orthner).

A number of factors can contribute to student mobility such as educational

concerns, safety concerns, and family instability, which can lead to housing issues

(Kerbow, 1996). Residential instability has been associated with a number of

characteristics including caregiver abuse and neglect, multiple hospitalizations, parental

separation, poor impulse control, lower IQ, and antisocial behavior (Mundy, Robertson,

Greenblatt, & Robertson, 1989).

Parental job termination, parental death, and marriage separation are all reason

families move (Mao et al., 1998). Mobile children who are living in a family structure in

which both biological parents are present seem to be unharmed by relocation (Tucker,

Marx, & Long, 1998). However, mobile children living in alternate family structures are

at risk for school problems even if they have only experienced a minimal amount of

mobility (Tucker et al., 1998). Children who come from single-parent families or

stepfamilies are more likely to move during the school year compared to children living

with both their parents (Astone & McLanahan, 1994). The typical family configuration

of frequent movers is a single mother household (Kerbow, 1996).

A mother's level of education appears to play a role in mobility, children whose

mothers have less than 12 years of education had a higher mobility rate than children

whose mothers had more than 12 years of education (Simpson & Fowler, 1994).

Children from families in which the head of the household was unemployed or had less

than a high school education, or whose mother was younger than 18 years old when the

child was born are more likely to experience frequent moves (Wood et al., 1993).

Mobile families with uninvolved fathers and unsupportive mothers seem to suffer

the effects of migration more significantly (Hagan, MacMillan, & Wheaton, 1996). If the

mother is supportive of the move, it can offset the negative effects of mobility (Hagan et

al.). A father's participation in the family is more important than his support to ease the

negative effects of a move (Hagan et al.).

According to Medway (1995), a family can go through several stages when they

move, they include: anticipation and preparation, this is when families consider both the

advantages and disadvantages of moving; planning, this is the stage where parents can do

everything possible to make sure the move goes smoothly, including transferring school

records; the actual move; initial adjustment, this can last six months or longer and is

when the family deals with the stress associated with the move; and finally, later

adjustment, this is when the family deals with the long-term issues associated with the

move.

Mobility during the adolescent years is seen as especially disruptive due to the

strong reliance of adolescents on their peers and social supports (Norford & Medway,

2002). Families seem to be better off after a move if all family members were in

agreement with the move and were able to see the reason for the move (Donohue &

Gullotta, 1983).

Transitions

School transitions can be broken down into two types; the first is scheduled. A scheduled change occurs when groups of students move together, for example a class entering high school together. An unscheduled move involves a student changing schools by themselves (Maher & Zins, 1992).

How a student perceives an event, and how desirable that event is to them can determine the stressfulness of an event (Maher & Zins, 1992). It takes half of all families who have relocated 12 to 18 months to feel at home in their new place (Wilson, 1993).

Students who move frequently may more readily accept the move and they may have better coping skills to deal with a move (Strother & Harvill, 1986). Children who are bright, do well academically, and are from middle or upper-middle-class families can become stronger after a move, are better able to handle a crisis, and to have higher level thinking skills (Miller & Cherry, 1991).   Of the mobile children who are considered to be at high risk, they tend to lack the ability to cope using internal resources or external supports needed for a successful transition into a new school (Jason et al., 1990). A child's risk for maladjustment and failure after a move is increased when stress over a move is combined with weakness in academic areas and other environmental stressors (Jason et al.).

A transition can be successful if children are given explanations for the reason for moving, and if parents are upbeat and optimistic (Medway, 1995).

Psychological effects

There is a widely held belief by the media, the general public, teachers, and school administrators that mobility has negative, long-term impacts on the mental health

and school performance of students (Medway, 1995). According to Medway, most children handle moving quite well and it is not nearly as stressful on children as many people have come to believe. Of those children who do not handle moving well it is likely they had presenting problems before the move (Medway).

When a family relocates, they can experience a range of emotions including helplessness, anxiety, loss, and anger (Hausman & Reed, 1991). Anger is a common emotion associated with relocating, and it is likely to increase when one feels a lack of control over the move (Hausman & Reed). When a family relocates they may have lost friends, family, familiar locations, and emotional supports (Hausman & Reed).

A relationship has been found between mobility and depression especially in adolescent females (Gibbs, 1986). As the number of life changes girls are exposed to increases, the lower their self-esteem becomes (Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford, & Blyth, 1987).

Students could feel a loss of control over their lives when they relocate (Strother & Harvill, 1986). The decision to move is often out of the adolescent's control (Kantor, 1965). When students relocate, they can feel like their freedom has been taken away and now they will have to focus on orientating to the new school and community, instead of breaking away from their families and working towards their own independence (Strother & Harvill).

Recent moves are a major predictor of stress and depression (Miller & Cherry, 1991). There is a significant correlation between household mobility and depression (Gibbs, 1986). Researchers have found that differences in adolescent depressed mood are associated with differences in family and school environments (Petersen et al., 1993).

Feelings of stress associated with a move may increase if the reason for the move is limited or lost resources such as a parent losing a job (Mao et al., 1998). A new student may require an early intervention as they may experience anxiety, anger, unusual withdrawal, academic problems, stress-related reactions, or acting-out (Medway, 1995).

Mundy et al. (1989) found that adolescents with a history of residential instability had higher rates of behavioral problems such as refusing school, runaway behavior, or behavioral problems in school leading to special education placement.

According to Blakeman (1993), "the effects of moving on an adolescent involve the loss of friends, school, and the familiar things that make up everyday life" (p. 1).   For some students, just one move can be traumatic (Blakeman, 1993). Relocation can not only be traumatic, but a crisis for some students (Hausman & Reed, 1991). A crisis can be defined as "a time limited state in which an individual faces a novel, problematic, situation in which her or his coping skills are ineffective" (Blakeman 1993, p. 3; Hausman & Reed, 1991). During a crisis, students may experience feelings of confusion, anxiety, and helplessness, and their sense of well-being can be disrupted (Hausman & Reed). A person with low self-esteem can often feel victimized and helpless, as they tend to lack the necessary resources to respond creatively and constructively to their new circumstances with which they are unfamiliar (Hausman & Reed). Relocation for these people can mean a loss of safety and security (Hausman & Reed).

When a person feels accepted, included, and welcomed, it can lead to a number of positive emotions, but when they feel excluded, ignored, or rejected, it can lead to negative feelings such as depression, grief, anxiety, jealousy, and loneliness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

A person can experience an event as stressful or unstressful depending on a number of variables including how desirable or undesirable they perceive the event to be as well as their coping styles (Gersten, Langner, Eisenberg, & Simcha-Fagan, 1977). There is considerable evidence to suggest that those who lack adequate supportive relationships are at risk for experiencing greater stress than those who do have adequate supportive relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Having adequate supportive relationships acts as a buffer against stress in that other people can lend support and assistance, which can enhance a person's ability to cope (Baumeister & Leary).

When children are faced with a move, they may use denial as a way to deal with the move, including denying the permanency of the move (Lane & Dickey, 1988). New students may refuse to engage academically, athletically, or even socially at the new school thinking that they will not be there for long (Lane & Dickey). New students may engage in delinquent behavior, thinking that they will not be there long enough to face any consequences (Lane & Dickey).

Most individuals who relocate will experience some form of stress, however if they are able to reestablish meaning and security in their new environment within a reasonable amount of time, they are less likely to suffer turmoil from their move (Hausman & Reed, 1991). Students who are supported during their transition are less likely to have problems with drugs, poor attendance, or to drop out of school (Miller & Cherry, 1991).

Children can react positively or negatively to a move, they may develop new talents and skills, or they may see the move as yet another disruption in their life

(Cornille et al., 1983). After a short period of feeling stressed and disorganized, children are usually able to successfully deal with a move (Cornille et al.).

Adjustment

According to Medway (1995), there are three particular variables associated with moving that may impact children. They are the distance moved, the degree to which the child perceives they had a choice in the move, and the reason for the move (Medway). According to Miller and Cherry (1991), the reasons for the move, a family's social status, the child's intellectual ability, the child's age, and the frequency of moves have a strong impact on a child's adjustments to a move.

According to Smardo (1987), children who have moved more than once tend to be better adjusted than those who have no history of moving.   Donohue and Gullotta (1983) suggested that there might be a survivor effect for those who move, those who do well become better at it and may enjoy it more, while those who do not cope well with moving, stop moving. Children who have experienced more than one move appear to be able to adapt to change in their new environment in a short amount of time and it also seems that their education is enhanced as a result of travel and other experiences associated with a family move (Smardo).

A number of factors appear to affect student adjustment after a move including opportunities for leadership roles, school size, curriculum demands, the quality of teacher-student interactions, policies and norms, and support services that are in place (Medway, 1995). Children who tend to do well after a move include those with athletic, social, economic, and intellectual strengths (Miller & Cherry, 1991). Children who

appear to be adversely affected after a move are those who lack the resources needed to cope with change, the least educated, and the poor (Miller & Cherry, 1991).

After a move, a child is faced with adjusting to a new school, a new environment, and a new peer group (Cornille et al., 1983). Several factors can affect the way a child adjusts after a move including the number of previous moves, individual personality, and whether the move is seen as something positive or negative (Smardo, 1987). Children appear to adjust to their new environment in a relatively brief amount of time (Cornille et al.). They may experience a period of stress until they get used to being known as the new kid, but overall there is no evidence of any long-term problems associated with moving (Cornille et al.).

Adolescents have to adjust to a number of things when they move including finding lockers, classes and buses, as well as becoming adjusted to their new teachers and oriented to new academic expectations and programs (Blakeman, 1993). In one study of transfer students 57% of the boys and 64% of the girls experienced problems with adjustment after the transfer (Gorwood, 1986). It should also be noted that some students experienced no problems after a school transfer (Gorwood).

Meeting new friends is one of the most important factors of adjusting after a move (Smardo, 1987). One study interviewed 100 students ranging from kindergarten to college after they had experienced a move and 52% reported meeting someone their own age during the first week after the move (Smardo).

According to Blakeman (1993), the average period of adjustment for new students was 23 days for peer relationships and 17 days for academic adjustment (Cornille et al., 1983). Research has shown that children who were well adjusted before a move tended to

be so afterwards and children who experienced difficulties before a move tended to continue with similar or greater difficulties after a move (Medway, 1995).

Mobility has a cumulative effect on adjustment period, as the number of moves increase, the adjustment period becomes longer (Kerbow, 1996). Research has found a distinction between students who improve and those who do not after a transfer. Background characteristics of mobile students such as housing, attitudes toward literacy, the level of parental education, and even parental occupation can affect how the student experiences a transfer (Gorwood, 1986).

Parents play a key role in helping their children to adjust after a move, their attitude towards the move is important as well as the manner in which they respond to their child's concerns regarding the move (Smardo, 1987). Well-adjusted students may be the result of positive parenting and better school environments (Jacobson & Rowe, 1999). Adolescents who are less well adjusted may perceive their environments more negatively (Jacobson & Rowe).

Because they tend to be more involved with activities, girls have an easier time with transitions than boys do (Donohue & Gullotta, 1983). Blakeman (1993) believed this might be due to girls having better coping skills than boys do.

Families who move longer distances are often more affected by changes in familiar locations and may experience greater feelings of loss due to not having familiar reference points (Cornille et al., 1983). When a family relocates, adolescents have the greatest feelings of loss of identity (Smardo, 1987). When a family moves they are faced with building new social ties in their new neighborhood. This includes forming

relationships with new classmates, teachers, and administrators (Swanson & Schneider, 1999). According to Cornille et al., the average period of adjustment is less than one year.

Medway (1995) found that the two most important factors in a successful move are the parent's attitudes and the opportunity to form new friendships. Additional factors that appear to be important for successful adjustment after a move are the mother's attitude about the move, and if children were able to make new friends in their new environment (Donohue & Gullotta, 1983).

The students most at risk for problems with adjustment after a move are those who have a physical handicap, are larger or smaller, or younger or older than their peers, those with a poor self-concept, come from families recently experiencing a major economic change, and those who are brighter or slower than their peers (Cornille et al., 1983).

Social aspects

New students have been found to have poorer friendship quality and fewer peer contacts than nonmobile students (Vernberg, 1990). The loss of peer relationships seems to be the most difficult part of moving for adolescents, as peers are the major support system for adolescents (Strother & Harvill, 1986). New students often encounter new peer groups and have to adjust to new expectations and values of the new peer group (Jason et al., 1990). When older children move they may find it difficult to break into already established cliques (Simpson & Fowler, 1994).

Acceptance is the most immediate challenge for a student who has relocated to a new school (Blakeman, 1993). When faced with the task of forming new friendships after a move it appears that younger adolescents have an easier time than older adolescents as

this task becomes more difficult for older children (Miller & Cherry, 1991). According to Smardo (1987), counselors reported that the most difficult time for new students is the lunch period on the first day of school.

In order for children to achieve satisfactory emotional adjustment, they must have an acceptable social status (Warden, 1968). Past successes are not always carried over from the old environment to the new; this means that new students are faced with the task of proving oneself once again which can be emotionally draining (Brown & Orthner, 1990). This can lead to new students feeling isolated and depressed in their new environment (Brown & Orthner). Transfer students need to receive credit and regular reinforcement from their parents acknowledging what they have achieved in school (Jason et al., 1990).

One of the most common needs expressed by new students involves peer interactions, such as meeting people their own age, and making new friends (Cornille et al., 1983). In research done by Vernberg (1990), mobile adolescents reported that they had fewer contacts with friends, less intimacy with the person identified as their best friend, and for boys, they reported experiencing increased instances of rejection. Vernberg suggested that it might take adolescents who have moved more than one school year to establish social relationships in their new setting and during that year adolescents can expect less contact with friends and less intimacy in the friendships they do have.

Research has acknowledged the importance of considering friendship patterns when plans are being made for a school transfer (Gorwood, 1986). When a student moves, he or she is faced with issues of separation and loss over their friends and familiar places (Eckenrode, Rowe, Laird, & Brathwaite, 1995). The loss of peer relationships

seems to be the most difficult part of moving for students (Blakeman, 1993). Moving can

be harder on adolescents than for children as friendships are so much more important to

adolescents (Blakeman, 1993). Research has indicated that those who have moved a

number of times can become less skilled at meeting new people and less willing to

replace the relationships they left behind (Brown & Orthner, 1990). Lane and Dickey

(1988) suggested that families move at other times during the year beside summer

because it can be very difficult for children to meet new people if school is not in session.

Individuals who are experiencing feelings of loneliness can benefit from

counseling in that it can provide opportunities for individuals to develop a sense of

belonging (Lee & Robbins, 1998). Loneliness is one of the most common psychological

problems individuals seek counseling for (Lee & Robbins). A sense of belonging, also

known as social connectedness reflects close relationships people have with the social

world (Lee & Robbins). When people feel connected, they are better able to handle their

own needs and emotions, which make them less vulnerable to anxiety, low self-esteem,

and depression (Lee & Robbins).

The family is seen as the most significant social setting for a child, followed by

school (Cornille et al., 1983). Moving may bring a family closer together as they share

experiences and rely on each other when other family members or friends are absent

(Arbetter, 1990). Miller and Cherry (1991), found that a positive aspect of moving is that

adolescents seemed to have stronger attachments to their families (Miller & Cherry).

During the year following a move, the use of parental strategies to help adolescents make

new friends can contribute to greater success in developing new friendships (Vernberg,

Beery, Ewell, & Abwender, 1993).

Connectedness

Students who report feeling connected to school have higher levels of emotional well being (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). Engagement is associated with higher educational aspirations, higher academic performance, and fewer incidences of school deviance (Lamborn, Brown, Mounts, & Steinberg, 1992). There is evidence to suggest that schools themselves can influence the degree to which students feel cared for in their schools (McNeely et al., 2002). The quality of the relationship between students and teachers is what helps to connect students to school (Hudley, Daoud, Polanco, Wright-Castro, & Hershberg, 2003).

When students' core developmental needs are met through the social environment, school connectedness in maximized (McNeely et al., 2002). Students, who are involved in extracurricular activities, do not skip school and receive higher grades feel more attached to school (McNeely et al.). When students feel like they are a part of their school and feel that they are cared about by the people at school, they are less likely to abuse substances, initiate sexual activity at an early age, or engage in violent behavior (McNeely et al.). How students perceive their relationships with teachers relates strongly with achievement, engagement, and future educational expectations (Hudley et al., 2003).

The size of a school can affect student engagement. McNeely et al. (2002) suggested that a school size of 300 students or less could maximize school connectedness. The size of a school plays a vital role in student engagement (Wehlage & Smith, 1992). The conditions in a smaller school are more likely to help with student engagement (Wehlage & Smith). School membership is more easily built in smaller schools due to more frequent face-to–face contact with adults, which help build personal

relationships (Wehlage & Smith). A smaller school setting may encourage people to act in a consistent and fair manner, which is interpreted by students as a commitment and caring from adults (Wehlage & Smith). Students who attend smaller schools feel more attached to school than those who attend larger schools (McNeely et al.).

Students who feel connected are more likely to participate enthusiastically in school activities, and experience few negative emotions, where as students who feel that they are unimportant or rejected are more likely to feel bored, frustrated, and alienated from academic activities (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Students with a high mobility rate are less involved with extracurricular activities (Moore, 1966). If students are not sufficiently integrated into the school they attend, they may choose to transfer to another school instead of dropping out (Rumberger & Larson, 1998). Other students however, may choose to drop out if their current experiences at school have diminished their goals and their commitment to school (Rumberger & Larson).

Poor connectedness in larger schools may be due to teachers not being able to maintain warm and positive relationships with all of their students (McNeely et al., 2002). McNeely et al. found that school connectedness is lower in schools experiencing difficulty with classroom management. Classroom management can be improved when teachers are consistent, empathetic, encourage student self-management, and allow students to make their own decisions (McNeely et al.). McNeely et al. also found that there is an overall lower level of school connectedness in schools that impose severe punishments for relatively minor rule infractions compared to schools that are more lenient.

Academics

A positive correlation has been found between the length of time students spend in the same school and achievement (Demie, 2002). Students who have spent longer amounts of time in the same school do better academically than students who have frequently changed schools (Demie). The students who are most likely to graduate are those who attend the same school throughout their entire school career (Unknown, 1991).

Residential mobility, even just one move, has consistently been linked to lower academic achievement (Astone & McLanahan, 1994). Felner, Primavera, & Cauce (1981), found that multiple school transfers appear to have a cumulative effect on students.

Studies have shown that even one move can have a negative effect for both academic and behavioral aspects in school (Tucker et al., 1998). Students who move at least once are more likely to achieve lower levels of academic achievement (Simmons et al., 1987), and drop out of high school (Astone & McLanahan, 1994). Research by Rumberger and Larson (1998), found that students between the eighth and twelfth grades who made just one nonpromotional school change were twice as likely as students who did not change schools to not complete high school.

Rumberger and Larson (1998) found that the effects of mobility appear to account for at least half of the differences in achievement. Rumberger and Larson found that students who made even one school change between eighth and twelfth grade compared to those who did not change were more likely to have either dropped out of school or enrolled in an alternative program for education.

Life changes can affect GPA negatively. Research has shown that GPA and participation in extracurricular activities decreases as the number of transitions increase (Simmons et al., 1987). For females experiencing a number of life changes, the effect on GPA appears to be curvilinear, meaning that coping becomes more difficult with each change and they may reach a point where it is just too difficult to cope (Simmons et al.).

Studies have found that students who move frequently, three or more times are at risk of grade retention (Wood et al., 1993). Rumberger and Larson (1998) found the effects of both moving and changing schools to be additive: students who did both were at a higher risk to not complete school or even obtain a GED, compared to students who only experienced one change. There is evidence to suggest that student mobility during a school career can diminish the prospect for graduation (Rumberger, 2002). Changes in academic performance after a move could be the result of emotional problems or difficulties adjusting to the new expectations, requirements, or teaching methods in the new school (Strother & Harvill, 1986).

Students who change schools are at risk of missing important concepts, which can be prerequisites for skills needed later on, especially in math (Kerbow, 1996). There is quite a difference in the pace of curriculum between schools that are more stable and those who have a high mobility rate (Kerbow). Having new students in class can be disruptive to the teachers and the students, teachers may become more review oriented and teach at a slower pace to accommodate new students (Kerbow). There is a risk that continuing these behaviors could flatten the pacing of curriculum (Kerbow). If the flattening effect of curriculum continues, there is a chance that the amount of material all students are exposed to will be limited (Kerbow).

In a study done by Felner et al. (1981), poor academic achievement was significantly related to high mobility rates especially for black and Hispanic students. They also found those students who had a number of school transfers and those who were black, were more likely to have lower academic achievement and a higher number of absences (Felner et al.). Rumberger and Larson (1998) found that as the number of school changes increased the likelihood of finishing school with a regular high school diploma decreased, and the likelihood of receiving a GED increased. This was true for students who made even one school change (Rumberger & Larson). In terms of race, black and Hispanic students were more likely to change high schools compared to white, Asian, and Native American students; and Hispanic and Native American students were more likely to drop out of school (Rumberger & Larson, 1998).

Parental characteristics also impact mobile students' abilities to achieve academically. Having a high level of student mobility can decrease the opportunities for students and parents to get to know the teachers and build long-term relationships (Beck, Kratzer, & Isken, 1997). Academic achievement has been positively associated with the education of the head of the household as well as the spouse's education, and the family income (Straits, 1987). Academic achievement has been negatively associated with having a female as head of household, being male, and having a large family especially with younger siblings (Straits). Research has shown that high mobility lowers student achievements especially students who come from low income and less educated families (Straits, 1987).

Children at risk of difficulties in school and school failure generally come from a lower socioeconomic background and have been exposed to a number of life stressors

(Jason et al., 1990). Durian (1986) identified several socioeconomic, demographic, and institutional characteristics that are highly correlated with a high probability of a student dropping out of school, they include "living in high-growth states, living in unstable school districts, being a member of a low-income family, having low academic skills (though not necessarily low intelligence), having parents who are not high school graduates, speaking English as a second language, being single-parent children, having negative self-perceptions; being bored or alienated; having low self-esteem, choosing alternatives: men tend to seek paid work as an alternative, while females may drop out to have children or get married" (p. 7).

When a move occurs, it can impact school adjustment and success. If an unscheduled school change occurs during the summer, the student will be less affected academically than if they had moved during the school year (Brockman & Reeves, 1967). According to Mao et al. (1998), the earlier in the year the student moved, the more likely they were to have higher academic outcomes. Academic achievement may be lowered due to residential mobility for a number of reasons including the possibility of missing important educational material, not having enough information about the new school including which classes and teachers are good and which ones should be avoided (Astone & McLanahan, 1994). Counselors may have difficulty obtaining academic records from previous schools making appropriate placement difficult (Cornille et al., 1983).

Swanson and Schneider (1999) found no evidence that mobility in the first couple of years of high school had an immediate effect on academic achievement. Rumberger and Larson (1998) found that students who achieved higher grades in middle school were less likely to experience a school change or to drop out of school between eighth and

twelfth grade. According to Miller and Cherry (1991), past academic performance was the strongest predictor of a child's academic performance after a move. Academic achievement may not be affected by the number of moves a student makes, in fact it has been suggested that at least in military families, mobility may improve student achievement (Marchant & Medway, 1987). Long (1975), found that students of highly educated parents were over-represented in growing communities and therefore those communities have higher scholastic scores than elsewhere. Medway (1995) found that mobility has virtually no effect on school achievement, but does point out that it can harm students who are academically under-prepared. It is interesting to note that Simpson and Fowler (1994) found that children who had only moved once or twice did not have a significant increase risk of repeating a grade or being expelled.

Long-term patterns of poor academic achievement and failure may be averted if a student receives the necessary support and resources to adapt to the transition (Jason et al., 1990). When a student feels like they belong, it can promote interest, enthusiasm, and increase their willingness to engage in academic activities (Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

Possible solutions

It is helpful for new students to receive support at school to help deal with their feelings associated with the move especially their fears and feelings of loss (Lane & Dickey, 1988), however the focus is generally on meeting basic requirements of the school such as schedules, academics, and becoming familiar with the physical surroundings (Blakeman, 1993). School counselors should be aware of the feelings of grief and loss students can experience over the friends they have left behind (Lane & Dickey, 1988). Individuals may need assistance in identifying their feelings of loss and

anger, and help to develop new resources to aid in increasing meaning and security in their lives (Hausman & Reed, 1991).

Mobility has been shown to have heavy demands on school resources (Demie, 2002). Demie found that a large amount of staff's time at a school might be spent dealing with mobility issues such as assessing the student's needs and integrating students. When a school is able to identify a particular mobility pattern, they can take steps to assist new students academically, including: adjusting the length of educational units, adjusting the pace of instruction, and timing the introduction of new material (Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990).

Visits to the new school before the transfer can be helpful to increase a student's confidence (Gorwood, 1986). A tour of the new school may be helpful to acquaint a student with their new environment, and to learn where their classrooms and cafeteria are located (Holland-Jacobsen, Holland, & Cook, 1984).

Suggested practices for schools to ease the transition of new students include social events such as special parties and dances (Cornille et al., 1983) to check in with students to see how things are going for them, have an open house for new students and their families, and counselors can meet with transfer students individually or run a group for new students (Blakeman, 1993). Holland-Jacobsen et al. (1984), warned against separating new students too much because they do not want to be isolated or treated as different. An orientation program and tutoring are strategies researchers have found helpful in working with at-risk students (Jason et al., 1990).

Medway (1995), provided tips for school staff for helping children who have relocated including announcing the arrival of new students, pair the student up with a

buddy, be sensitive to the stress a family may be feeling after a move, try not to retain new students, and keep in close contact with the family.

A program was initiated in the Rochester City School District in which the schools told parents about the negative effects of moving from one location to another (Schuler, 1990). Letters were sent home in Spanish and in English and the school district even offered to help settle landlord disputes and helped find alternative apartments or homes, which would allow the student to continue attending the same school (Schuler).

Strong leadership, staff commitment, and fair discipline are all characteristics of successful schools dealing with at-risk students (Durian, 1986). Teachers should be clear about their expectations regarding learning and behavior (Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990). Schools should continue to have contact with the parents of the new student (Miller & Cherry, 1991). The new school should help facilitate interactions between the new student and current students at the new school (Miller & Cherry).

Some schools have developed programs and clubs for new students but have found them to be unneeded (Cornille et al., 1983). There is the risk that new students who participate in activities for new students may be seen as an outsider instead of helping to integrate them into their new school (Cornille et al.). Some schools offer a series of meetings for new students to get together and discuss their experiences (Cornille et al.). Some have parties or dances and have the new students attend as guests, and others have an open house just for new students (Cornille et al.).

Schools can help to prevent educational and personal difficulties of new students by making changes to the roles of school personnel, and increasing the level of social support to aide in decreasing the confusion and complexity of the new environment

(Feldner, Ginter, & Primavera, 1982). Teachers may benefit from an in-service addressing how they can assist new students to become integrated in their new school (Holland-Jacobsen et al., 1984). "When teachers take on the role of mentor, friend and confidant as well as instructor; when schools modify their policies in ways that acknowledge the difficult circumstances often encountered by students in their day-to-day lives; and when classrooms come to be characterized by learning activities that are meaningful for students and demand their active involvement, alienated students can develop a high level of engagement that results in achievement" (Wehlage & Smith, 1992 p. 93-94).

The school receiving the new student should take time to review the record from the previous school and spend some time with the new student (Miller & Cherry, 1991). New students may benefit from special tutoring to catch up on material their new class has already covered (Holland-Jacobsen et al., 1984). Providing highly mobile students with some type of individualized instruction can also be a helpful intervention (Beck et al., 1997). It would be helpful if schools could be aware of curricula taught at other schools at the same grade level (Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990). Having a smaller school size helps schools be successful in that it allows for more frequent face-to-face contact (Durian, 1986).

"Characteristics of effective schools include effective leadership, the belief that carefully planned instruction will work and students will learn, close monitoring of student progress, and a clearly described and family implemented discipline code" (Durian, 1986, p. 1).

Method

The purpose of this study was to compare students who chose to participate in group sessions for new students with students who chose not to participate in the group sessions. The results of surveys taken prior and post group sessions as well as grade point averages were examined.

The study was conducted in a high school in a suburb of Rochester, NY. There are approximately 1,500 students in the high school, which encompasses 9th through 12th grades. Ninety-two students receive a reduced lunch and 111 students receive a free lunch. The total district population is 22,334. The district budget for the 2004-2005 school year was $55,059,017. The racial configuration in the village where the school is located is 96.2% Caucasian (non-Hispanic), 1.9% Hispanic, 0.8% two or more races, 0.6% Black, and 0.6% American Indian.

Procedure

A list of names of high school students new to the district was obtained from the registrar at the high school. The list had 49 names on it. Forty-nine surveys were sent out to each new student along with a letter introducing the researcher to the students (Appendix A). The survey, which was designed by the researcher, had four statements and one question on it. Students were asked to rate on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The question at the end asked students if they would be interested in joining a group that would meet regularly to discuss their experiences of being new students. The statements students were asked to respond to were 1-"Other students at school care about me." 2-

"The teachers and staff at school care about me." 3- "I have friends here at school." 4-"I feel connected to school."

Forty-two surveys were returned and seventeen students expressed an interest in attending a group for new students. The researcher met individually with each student when the surveys were returned to the counseling office. The researcher asked each student how their first year was going and explained the basics of the group sessions to each student. Students were each offered a welcome gift for completing the survey. It took several attempts to obtain completed surveys from some of the students. In order to collect all of the surveys some students were sent passes to come to the counseling office and some students were called down to the counseling office from the main office.

Students were divided into two groups. Group 1 was made up of those who participated in group (attended at least one group session), and Group 2 was made up of those who did not participate in the group. Of the seventeen students who indicated they would be interested in attending the group, thirteen students actually attended at least one session. Before the group sessions began, the researcher sent out another letter to the students who had expressed interest in attending the group to let them know that the group would be starting and the dates and times the group would be meeting (Appendix B). Group 1 was made up of seven freshman girls, one freshman boy, one sophomore boy, two junior boys, and two senior girls. This group included two foreign exchange students.   Group 2 was made up of three freshman girls, eight freshman boys, six sophomore girls, three sophomore boys, two junior girls, three junior boys, and four senior girls. This group included one foreign exchange student.

A student in Group 1, who had initially decided he was not interested in attending the group, changed his mind and attended one group session and then moved again before he could attend another group session. Therefore, post survey data along with grades were not available for this student.   A student in Group 2 who had expressed interest in attending the group was excluded due to severe behavioral and emotional problems. The same student was unable to complete a post survey, neither was any post data available including grades because she moved. Another student in Group 2, who chose not to participate in the group, was seen for individual counseling. A third student in Group 2 also chose not to participate in the group, but his mother called the counseling office expressing concern about him having a difficult time adjusting to his new school. He was seen by a counselor on an individual basis several times.

The group was originally scheduled to meet for ten sessions, but only ended up meeting for eight sessions due to no students attending one week and the researcher being out of town for one week. The group met on Tuesdays, and the periods rotated throughout the day. Passes to attend the group were sent to each student's first period teacher each week.

The first group session met on January 18, 2005, Period 1, in a large conference room in the high school. Six students attended, Students # 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 13. A complete table of group attendance can be seen in Table 1. Introductions were made and each student was asked to make a nametag to be placed in from of them. Students took turns introducing themselves to the group, and sharing a little bit about themselves including the school they attended before this one. Some students were reluctant to talk; some were even shy about introducing themselves to the group. The time in this session

was spent discussing how the group wanted to spend their time together as well as

expectations for the group.

Table 1

Group 1 attendance during 2005

	1/18	2/1	2/8	2/15	3/1	3/8	3/15	3/22	3/29
Student 1		X	X						
Student 2		X							
Student 3	X	X	X						
Student 4		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Student 5					X		X	X	X
Student 6	X	X	X						
Student 7	X	X			X				
Student 8	X		X						
Student 9					X				
Student 10							X		
Student 11	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
Student 12		X			X				
Student 13	X	X							

The second session was held on February 1, 2005, Period 2, in a large conference

room in the high school. Eight students attended this session, Students # 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7,

12, and 13. The focus of this session was to have group members get to know each other.

Each student shared something about himself or herself. Students were asked to write

down three statements about themselves, two true statements and one false. Students

took turns reading their statements to the group. It was up to the group to decide which

statement was false.

The third session of group was held on February 8, 2005, Period 3, in a large conference room in the high school. Six students attended this session, Students # 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 11. The focus of this session was for the group members to get to know one another a little better. Each student was given a list and had to find out who had done the things on the list. The purpose of this session was to encourage students to interact with each other and to learn about each other. There was also the possibility that students would find out that they had similar interests.

The fourth session was held on February 15, 2005, Period 4. The group was moved from the large conference room to different location from this week on. The group met in the room used by the school psychologist and his secretary. The group facilitator had reserved the conference room for the ten scheduled sessions, but the school psychologist needed to use the conference room for CSE meetings. A note was placed on the conference room to notify the students that the location had been changed. Two students attended this session, Students # 4, and 11. The focus of this session was academics. Students discussed classes and teachers that they liked and did not like and why. They also discussed grades, if they were satisfied with their grades, and if they thought that they were capable to doing better. The facilitator discussed academic resources available to the students. After this group session, the secretary in the counseling office told the facilitator that she had forgotten to send out the passes to the students for that week's group session. This could explain such a low turn out.

The fifth group session was held on March 1, 2005, Period 5. Six students attended this session, Students # 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 12. The focus of this session was to encouraged students to interact with one another. Students were given a nametag with

the name of a famous person on it. The students were instructed to stand in a circle and place the nametag on their neighbor's back. Students were then instructed to ask fellow group members yes or no questions to figure out whom they were. When students finished the exercise, they began to discuss the differences of the schools they attended before this one. One student, a foreign exchange student, talked about cultural differences, including alcohol use. This sparked quite a bit of conversation among the group members. At the end of the session, at the students' request, the facilitator passed out passes for the next week's session since there had been a mix up the week before and the passes had not gone out.

The sixth group session was scheduled for March 8, 2005, Period 6. No students attended this session.

The seventh group session was held on March 15, 2005, Period 7. Four students attended, Students # 4, 5, 10, and 11. Based on the discussion at the end of the previous group session, the focus this week was drug and alcohol use. The group discussed reasons why students choose to use drugs and/or alcohol and reasons why some students choose not to use drugs and alcohol. The group also discussed the effects of drugs and alcohol, how to tell if someone has a problem with drugs and alcohol, and where students can go to get help.

The eighth group session was held on March 22, 2005, Period 8. Three students attended, Students # 4, 5, and 11.   The focus of this session was stress. Students discussed what stress is, what causes stress, and ways people deal with stress. Students were taught a breathing technique to help deal with stress.

The ninth and final group session was held on March 29, 2005, Period 9. Three

students attended this session, Students # 4, 5, and 11. The focus of this session was

termination. The facilitator asked for feedback from the group. The group said that they

liked the group, they liked getting out of class, group was relaxing for them, and they

liked having snacks (snacks were served during the first group session and the final group

session). The group could not identify anything that they did not like about the group,

but did suggest that group could be improved by taking field trips and they suggested

going to an amusement park. The group also said that they would like to continue

meeting.

Once the group had terminated, another set of letters and surveys (Appendix C)

were sent out to the thirty-nine students who had completed and returned the first survey

to follow up with the students. Three students moved and, therefore, did not complete a

follow-up survey. The follow-up survey was very similar to the first survey; the only

difference was that the question about students being interested in joining a group for

new students was removed. The four statements remained the same. The researcher had

several students called down to the counseling office from the main office to ask students

for their surveys.

Evaluation

The results of surveys taken prior and post group sessions as well as grade point

averages were examined.   Grade point averages were obtained using the school's

software program, Power School.

Histograms showing the answers for the surveys were examined for trends. The

differences between pre and post group sessions were evaluated using the average score

for the different statements. Similarly, the differences between Group 1 and Group 2 were evaluated using the average scores. In order to examine the statistical difference between results a t-test analysis was performed on the data. The t-score for two sets of data is given by,

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{\sqrt{\dfrac{\sigma_1^2}{n_1} + \dfrac{\sigma_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

where $\bar{x}_1$ and $\bar{x}_2$ are the mean for the data sets, σ_1^2 and σ_2^2 are the variance for the data sets, and n_1 and n_2 are the number of samples in Group 1 and Group 2, respectively. The calculated t-score was compared with the t-test value from tables, assuming a typical probability of 0.05; if the calculated score was higher than the t-test value, the results were statistically different. The t-test analysis between different data sets is presented in Appendix D.

The grade point averages pre and post groups were used in conjunction with survey scores for individual students to determine if there was a correlation between student performance and their perception of connectedness

Results

Histograms were shown in figures 1 and 2. The results for Group 1 showed that the histograms for statements 1 and 2 were very similar. Statement 3 showed a broader range for pre-group scores and a more narrow range for post-group scores. The post scores were also more skewed to the higher scores. There was a more narrow range for the pre-group scores for statement 4 and a much broader range of scores for the post-group scores.

The results for Group 2 showed that the histograms for statements 1 and 2 were similar. The pre-survey results had a broader range for statement 1 and the post-survey results had a broader range for statement 2. The pre and post results for Statement 3 were very similar in that they were both very heavy at the high end of the scores. There was not much difference in the histogram for statement 4. The scores for the pre and post scores had a very similar range, although the pre scores had a slightly broader range than the post scores.

The results of Group 1 (those who participated in the group), were compared to Group 2 (those who did not participate in the group). Both groups had students that moved during the school year, who had a chance to respond to the survey prior to the group sessions but did not participate in the post-group survey. In order to keep the number of responses consistent, the results of the pre and post surveys were compared with the answers of those individuals excluded. The difference in answers with and without these students can be seen in Table 2.

The first statement on the survey was "Other students at school care about me." Group 1 had a pre-group mean score of 4.18. Group 2 had a pre-group mean score of 4.18. There was no difference in the mean scores. Group 1 had a post-group mean score of 4.27, and Group 2 had a post-group mean score of 4.07. Group 1 had a higher post-group mean score than Group 2 by 0.2. Group 1 had a pre to post score increase of 0.09. Group 2 had a pre to post score decrease of 0.11. The graphical comparison between all of the statements is shown in figures 3, 4, 5, and 6.
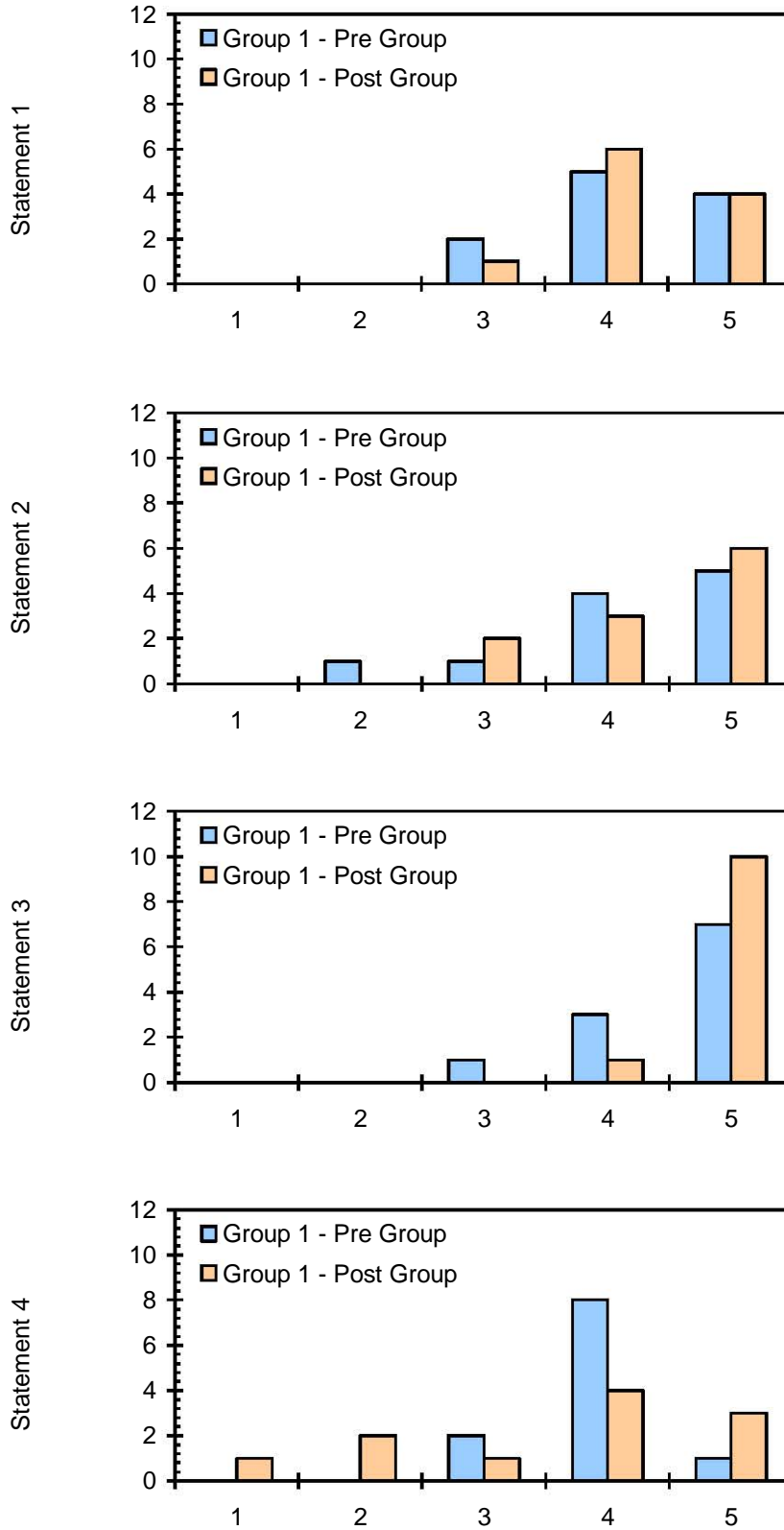
Figure 1. Histograms for Group 1 for scores given to different statements.
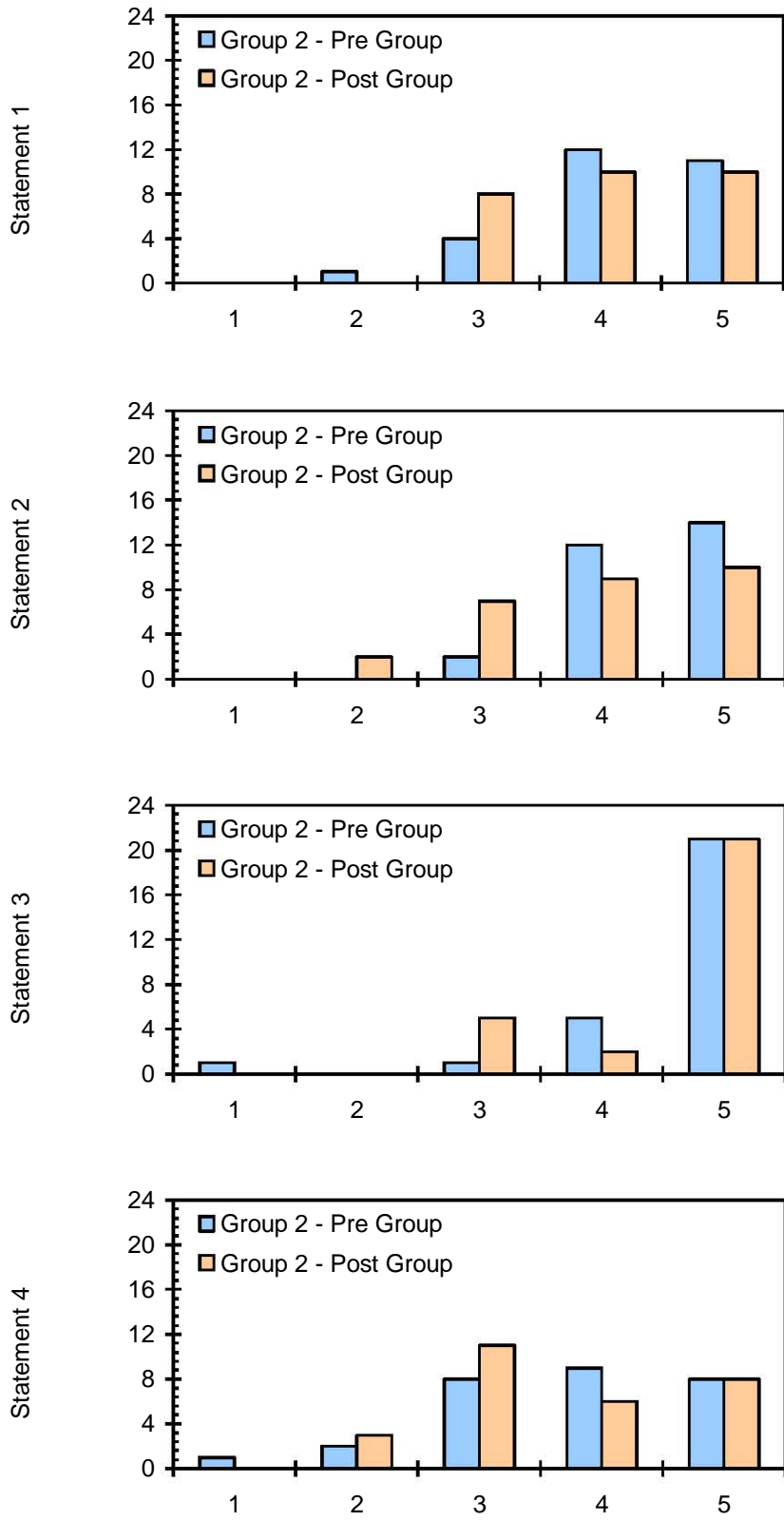
Figure 2. Histograms for Group 2 for scores given to different statements.

Table 2

Average survey results for different groups.

	Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3	Statement 4
Group 1 (All) - Pre Group	4.27	4.36	4.91	3.59
Group 1 (Exclusive) - Pre Group	4.18	4.23	4.55	3.91
Group 1 - Post Group	4.27	4.36	4.91	3.59
Group 2 (All) - Pre Group	4.14	4.41	4.62	3.72
Group 2 (Exclusive) - Pre Group	4.18	4.43	4.61	3.75
Group 2 - Post Group	4.07	3.96	4.57	3.68

The second statement on the survey was, "The teachers and staff at school care about me." Group 1 had a pre-group mean score of 4.23. Group 2 had a pre-group mean score of 4.43. Group 2 had a higher pre-group mean score than Group 1 by 0.2. Group 1 had a post-group mean score of 4.36. Group 2 had a post-group mean score of 3.96. Group 1 had a higher post-group mean score than Group 2 by 0.4. Group 1 had a pre to post score increase of 0.13. Group 2 had a pre to post score decrease of 0.34.

The third statement on the survey was "I have friends here at school." Group 1 had a pre-group mean score of 4.55. Group 2 had a pre-group mean score of 4.61. Group 2 had a higher pre-group mean score than Group 1 by 0.06. Group 1 had a post-group mean score of 4.91. Group 2 had a post-group mean score of 4.57. Group 1 had a higher post-group mean score than Group 2 by 0.34. Group 1 had a pre to post score increase of 0.36. Group 2 had a pre to post score decrease of 0.04.

The fourth statement on the survey was "I feel connected to school." Group 1 had a pre-group mean score of 3.91. Group 2 had a pre-group mean score of 3.75. Group 1 had a higher pre-group mean score than Group 2 by 0.16. Group 1 had a post-group mean score of 3.59. Group 2 had a post-group mean score of 3.68. Group 2 had a higher

post-group mean score than Group 1 by 0.09. Group 1 had a pre to post score decrease of 0.32. Group 2 had a pre to post score decrease of 0.07.

Overall, the mean scores for Group 1 increased on statements 1-3 and decreased on statement 4 on the post-group surveys, compared to Group 2 in which all of the mean scores for statements 1-4 decreased on the post-group surveys.

A t-test for the data showed that although there was a difference in the mean values for different surveys, the differences were not statistically significant. The only exception was for Group 2 scoring the Statement 2 "The teachers and staff at school care about me." Another result that almost had a significant statistical difference was between Groups 1 and 2 post groups regarding statement 3, "I have friends here at school." With Group 1 rating higher than Group 2.
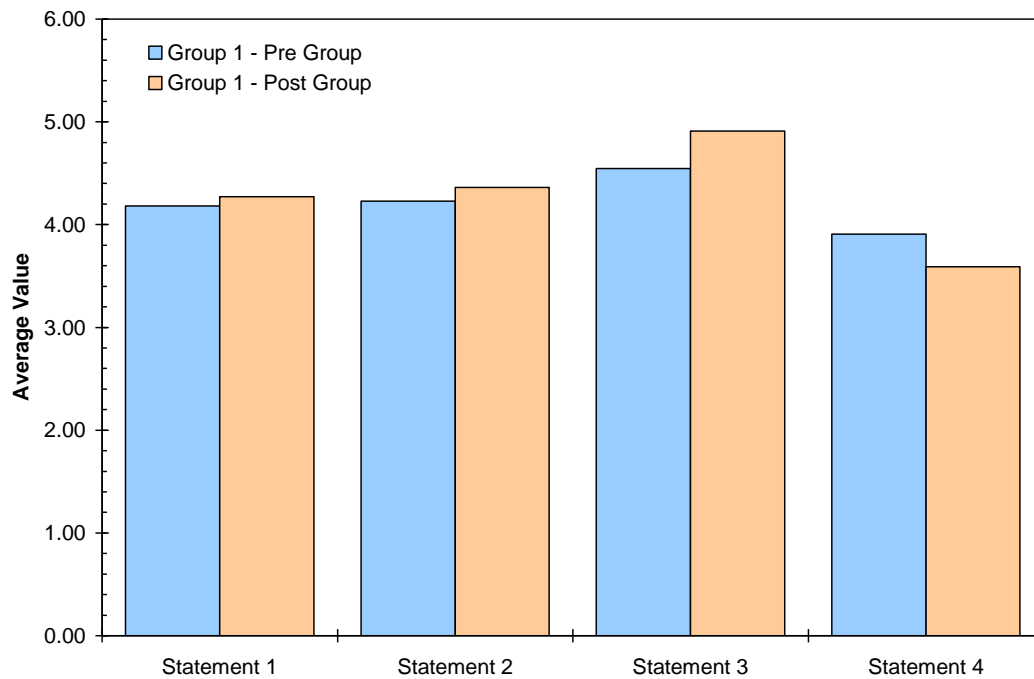
Figure 3. Average score values comparison for Group 1 before and after the groups.
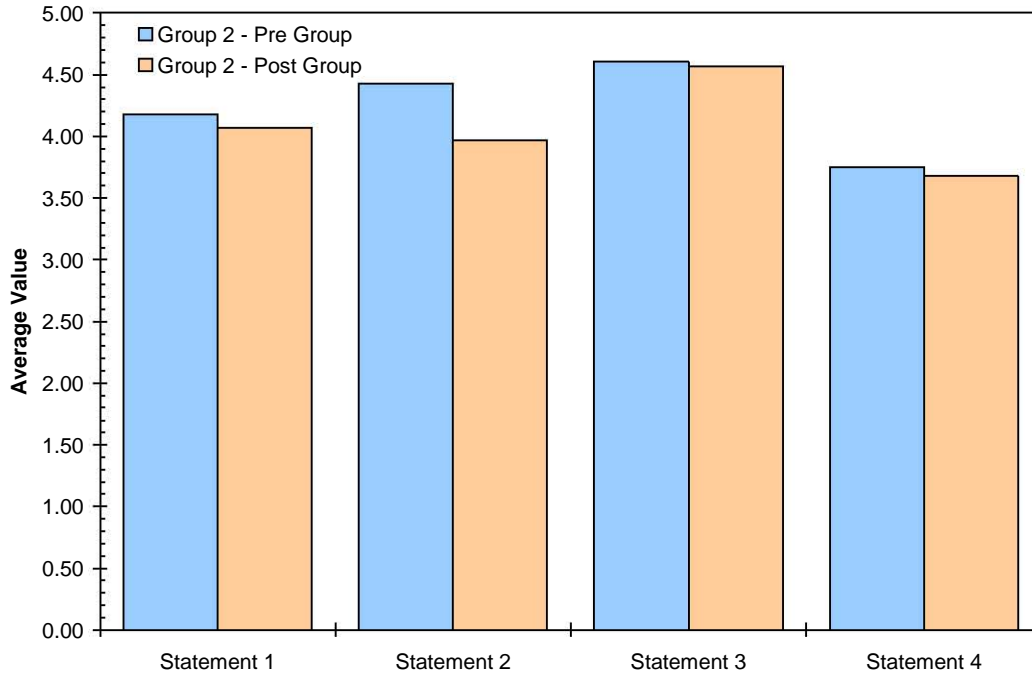
Figure 4. Average score values comparison for Group 2 before and after the groups.
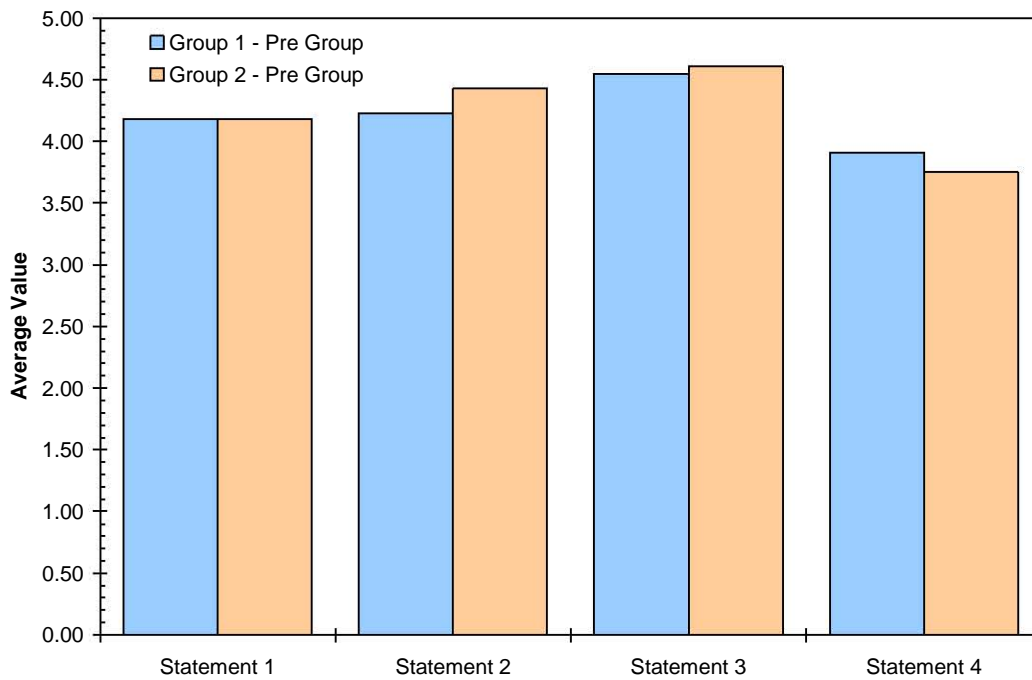
Figure 5. Average score values comparison for Group 1 and Group 2 before the groups.
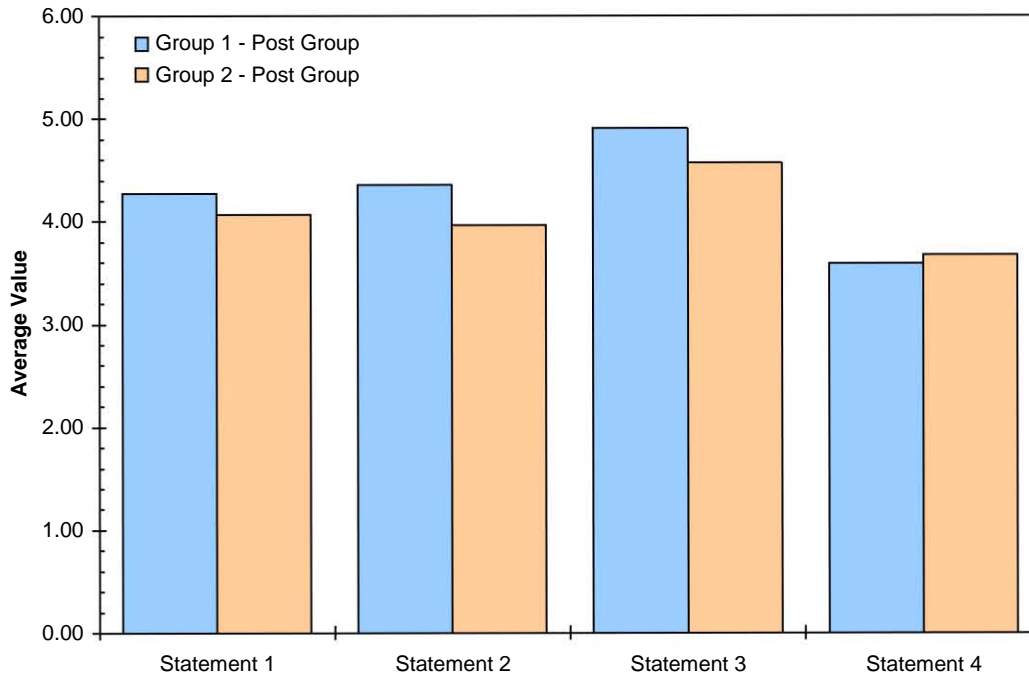
Figure 6. Average score values comparison for Group 1 and Group 2 after the groups.

Grades of students in both groups were compared before the group began and after the group terminated (Appendix E). A comparison between the second quarter (pre-group) GPA with the third quarter (post-group) GPA was performed for both groups. Group 1 had a mean second quarter GPA of 80.27. Group 2 had a mean second quarter GPA of 79.18. Group 1 had a higher pre-group mean GPA than Group 2 by 1.09. Group 1 had a third quarter mean GPA of 80.51. Group 2 had a third quarter mean GPA of 80.77. Group 2 had a higher post-group mean GPA than Group 1 by 0.26. The overall increase in the mean GPA for Group 1 was .24. The overall increase in the mean GPA for Group 2 was 1.59. Group 2 had an overall higher increase in the mean GPA than Group 1 by 1.35.

In addition to comparing the average GPA for both groups, the results of the surveys were also analyzed using the GPA. An attempt was made of correlating the overall feeling of connectedness of the students based on their GPA. Figure 7 shows the mean survey scores as a function of the students GPA, both before and after the group sessions. It can be seen that there is little correlation between a student's performance with his/her feelings of connectedness. An attempt was also made of correlating the GPA variation with the changes in the survey scores. Figure 8 shows the change in the average survey scores as a function of the student's GPA changes. Again, the figure shows little correlation between the student's performance and their feelings of connectedness.
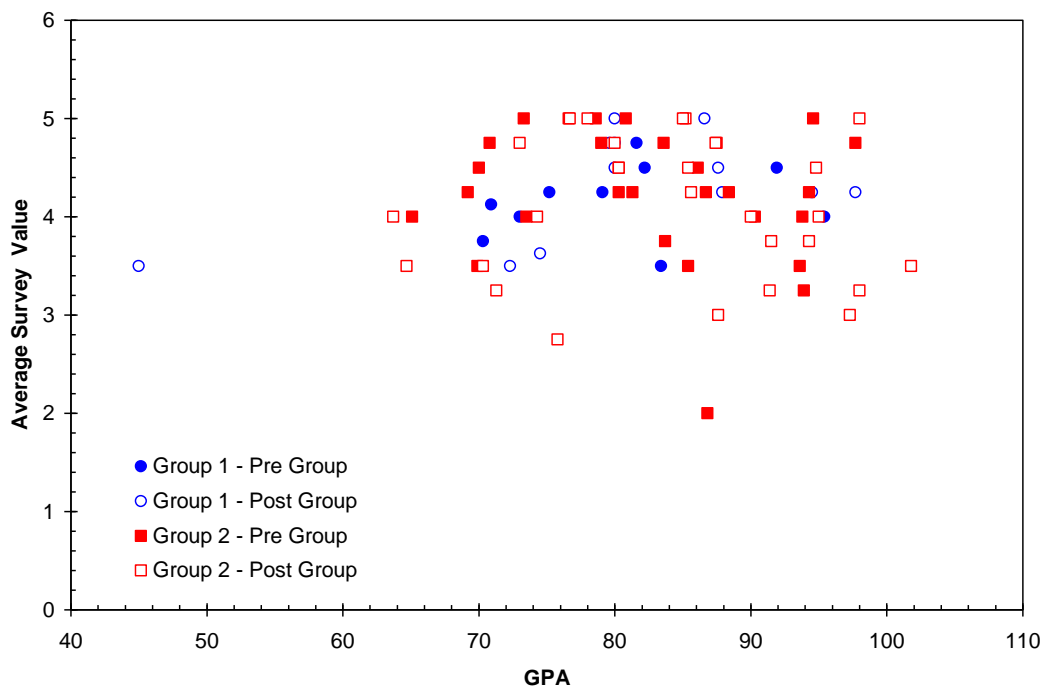
Figure 7. Survey response as a function of student grade point average.
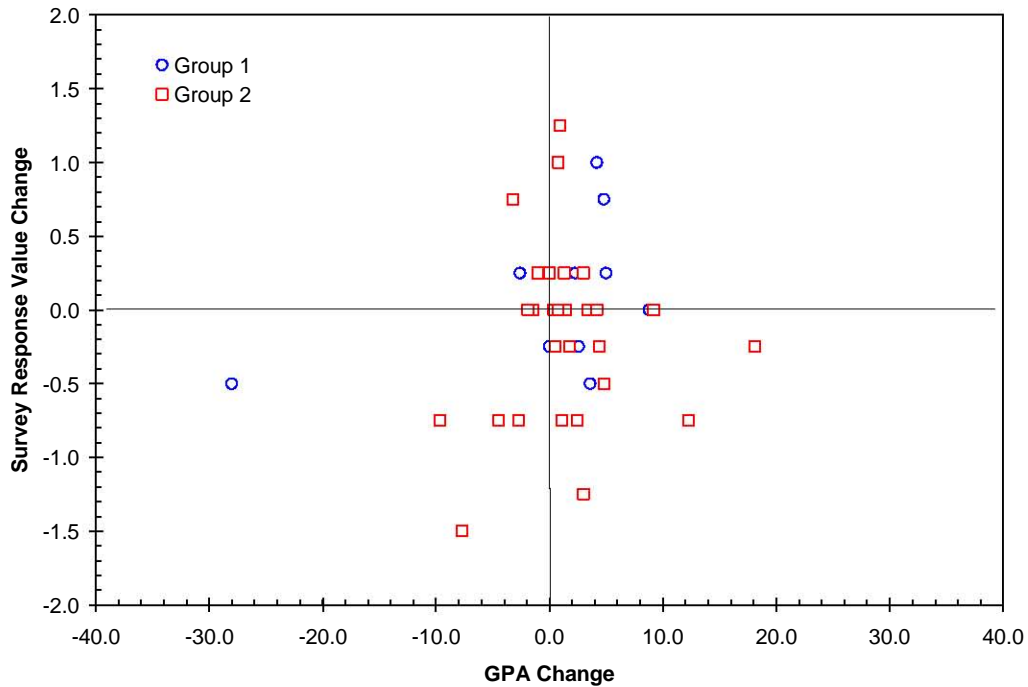
Figure 8. Change in the survey response as a function of the change in student grade point average.

Discussion

This study was completed to see if a group of new students would increase how they rated their feelings of connectedness and their GPA. Changes within each group and differences between the groups were evaluated. A survey, developed by the researcher was administered before and after the group sessions. Both groups had an increase in GPA. Group 1 had a higher pre group mean score than Group 2 on statement 3. Group 2 had higher pre group mean scores on statements 2 and 3, and there was no difference between the groups' pre group mean score for statement 1. The scores on the post group surveys showed that Group 1 had a higher mean score than Group 2 on statements 1, 2,

and 3. Group 2 had a higher mean score than Group 1 for statement 4 on the post group

survey.

The results showed that not only did Group 1 increase their scores on three out of

the four statements; they also had higher post group scores than Group 2 on three out of

the four statements. Both groups' scores decreased on the fourth statement, "I feel

connected to school."

Research has indicated that mobility can be very disruptive for adolescents

because of their strong reliance on their peers (Norford & Medway, 2002). A major

focus of the group was socialization. The hope was that the group would provide an

opportunity for new students to meet each other and share their experiences of being new.

Research has shown that there is considerable evidence suggesting that students who lack

adequate supportive relationships are at risk for experiencing greater stress compared to

students who do have adequate supportive relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Peer interactions, (meeting people their own age) is one of the most commonly expressed

needs of new students (Cornille et al., 1983). Research has also indicated that new

students have been found to have poorer friendship qualities and fewer peer contacts than

nonmobile students (Vernberg, 1990).

Mobility is usually thought to have many negative and long-term impacts on

student's well being and academic performance (Medway, 1995). However, there is

evidence to show that mobility may not be as stressful for students as many people have

come to believe (Medway, 1995). This was indicated by the survey results in that the

results of the pre-group survey were higher than expected. This could be explained by

the findings in some research indicating that students who move frequently may have an

easier time accepting the move and are better able to cope with a move (Strother &

Harvill, 1986). Research has shown that students who were well adjusted before a move,

tended to be so after a move and those who were not well adjusted before a move tended

to continue to have difficulties (Medway, 1995).

Perhaps the results of the pre survey were higher than expected because as

research has indicated, students are usually able to successfully deal with a move after

feeling stressed for a short period of time (Cornille et al., 1983). Blakeman (1993)

suggested that the average period of adjustment for new students is 23 days for peer

relationships and 17 days for academics. The results of this study may have been

different if it had been done in the beginning of the school year instead of in the middle.

As the research indicates, students had already had time to adjust to their new school

before the group even started.

The survey asked students if they felt cared about by the teachers and staff at

school because research has shown that the quality of teacher-student interactions can

affect a student's adjustment to a new school (Medway, 1995), and students who report

feeling connected to school have higher levels of emotional well being (McNeely et al.,

2002).

Research has indicated that the quality of the relationship between students and

teachers is what helps to connect students to the school (Hudley et al., 2003). The results

of this study did not show this. During the post survey, Group 1 had an increase for the

statement "teachers and staff at school care about me" but a decrease in the statement "I

feel connected to school." There was a concern that some students did not know what it

meant to feel connected to school, as one student asked what connected meant when he was filling out his post survey.

Not only do students' perceptions of their relationships with their teachers relate strongly with engagement, is also relates to academic achievement (Hudley et al., 2003). Both groups had an increase in GPA, although Group 2 had a higher increase. Perhaps the increase in Group 1 is due to their participation in the group and feeling a connection with other students and the researcher. Research has shown that when student feels like they belong; it can increase their willingness to engage in academic activities (Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

Counselor Implications

School counselors should be aware of the feelings students experience over the loss of their friends they had to leave behind (Lane & Dickey, 1988). It is easy for the adjustment of new students to take a back seat at the beginning of the school year because counselors can be so caught up in the chaos that occurs during this time of the year including fixing schedules. There is usually a welcome party in the beginning of the year for the new students at the high school where the study was conducted, but due to a computer problem wiping out all of the student schedules on the second day of school, which set the counseling department back at least two weeks, the welcome party never happened. It is unknown how results of the same survey or GPA would be affected if new students had attended the party. It is also unknown how the results of the two groups would differ if the group sessions had been held in the beginning of the year. It would also be interesting to compare the groups' results to a random sample of students in the same school who were not new.

School counselors should know that the students who attended the group had an increase in their scores on the survey, and a possible reason for the increase is that they attended the group. They should also know that the students who gave feedback said that they really enjoyed the group and wanted it to continue.

Recommendations for future research

The main recommendation for repeating this study would be to do it in the beginning of the year, possibly twice a year since not all new students start school at the beginning of the year. Other suggestions include having fewer sessions and keeping the groups to a smaller number. It seemed that the smaller the number of students, the more the students participated.

A piece of feedback received from the group was that they wanted to go on a field trip, they meant to an amusement park. After giving it some thought the researcher asked the group if a field trip around town would have been helpful, to orient them to their new community and they said that it would be.

It is also worth noting that the group did not seem very interested in discussing their experiences of being a new student. Not one student in the group reported having a difficult time with adjustment (at least they did not share that they did). They shared that they all had a fairly easy time meeting people and making new friends.

It appears as thought the students in this study were not nearly as negatively affected by their move as was expected. Perhaps it was because the study was done late in the year and they already had sufficient time to adjust. The important part of this study is that the results indicate that the students in Group 1 increased their connectedness as well as their GPA.

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Appendix A

Dear

Welcome to Spencerport High School! My name is Colleen Hoy, and I am new this year as an intern in the counseling department. I am interested in meeting you and would like to hear about your experiences of being a new student this year.

I have a welcome gift waiting for you. Please stop in to see me and drop off the enclosed survey on Thursday, December 16th, or Friday, December 17th.

I am looking forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Colleen Hoy

Name: _____

Grade: _____

Date: _____

Please circle the number that best represents how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

1. Other students at school care about me.

1	2	3	4	5

2. The teachers and staff at school care about me.

1	2	3	4	5

3. I have friends here at school.

1	2	3	4	5

4. I feel connected to school.

1	2	3	4	5

Would you be interested in joining a group to discuss your experiences of being a new student?   Yes   No
                                        (please circle one)

Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix B

Dear

The New Student group will be starting next week! We will be meeting on Tuesdays and we will rotate periods each week. The first group meeting will be on Tuesday, January 18th, Period 1. We will be meeting in the Conference Room, Room #324. Please feel free to stop in the counseling department and see me with any questions you may have. The schedule of when we will be meeting is below. Please come to as many group meetings as you would like. I will send you a pass each week for the group. I understand that some of you may not be able to make it to the first group meeting as you may have a midterm in class during that time.
I'm looking forward to seeing you!

Colleen Hoy
Counseling intern

January 18	Per. 1
January 25	Midterms, no group this week
February 1	Per 2
February 8	Per 3
February 15	Per 4
February 22	February break, no group this week
March 1	Per 5
March 8	Per 6
March 15	Per 7
March 22	Per 8
March 29	Per 9
April 5	Per 1

Appendix C

Dear

I would like to check in with you again to see how your first year at Spencerport High School is going. I have enclosed another copy of the survey you filled out earlier in the year. Please fill it out and drop it off to me in the counseling office.
I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Colleen Hoy, counseling intern

Name: _____

Grade: _____

Date: _____

Please circle the number that best represents how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

4. Other students at school care about me.

    1   2   3   4   5

5. The teachers and staff at school care about me.

    1   2   3   4   5

6. I have friends here at school.

    1   2   3   4   5

4. I feel connected to school.

    1   2   3   4   5

Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix D

Group 1

Student Survey - Pre Group Data

	Sex	Grade	Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3	Statement 4
Student 1	F	9	4	4	5	4
Student 2	F	9				
Student 3	F	9	5	4	5	4
Student 4	F	9	3	5	4	3
Student 5	F	9	4	3	5	4
Student 6	F	9	5	2.5	5	4
Student 7	F	9	5	5	5	4
Student 8	M	9	5	4	5	5
Student 9	M	10				
Student 10	M	11	4	5	4	4
Student 11	M	11	4	5	3	4
Student 12	F	12	3	4	4	3
Student 13	F	12	4	5	5	4
		Average	4.18	4.23	4.55	3.91
		Variance	0.564	0.768	0.473	0.291
		N1 - 1	10	10	10	10

Student Survey - Post Group Data

	Sex	Grade	Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3	Statement 4
Student 1	F	9	4	5	5	3
Student 2	F	9				
Student 3	F	9	5	5	5	4
Student 4	F	9	3	5	4	2
Student 5	F	9	4	4	5	4
Student 6	F	9	4	3	5	2.5
Student 7	F	9	5	3	5	5
Student 8	M	9	5	5	5	5
Student 9	M	10				
Student 10	M	11	5	5	5	5
Student 11	M	11	4	4	5	1
Student 12	F	12	4	5	5	4
Student 13	F	12	4	4	5	4
		Average	4.27	4.36	4.91	3.59
		Variance	0.418	0.655	0.091	1.741
		N2 - 1	10	10	10	10
Degrees of freedom			20	20	20	20
t-value from table			2.09	2.09	2.09	2.09
t-value from data			0.304	0.362	1.532	0.706

Group 2

Student Survey - Pre Group Data

	Sex	Grade	Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3	Statement 4
Student 1	F	9	4	5	4	4
Student 2	F	9	5	5	5	5
Student 3	F	9	3	4	4	3
Student 4	M	9	4	4	5	4
Student 5	M	9	4	4	5	4
Student 6	M	9	4	5	5	5
Student 7	M	9	3	4	4	2
Student 8	M	9	3	3	1	1
Student 9	M	9	5	5	5	5
Student 10	M	9	4	5	5	4
Student 11	M	9	4	4	5	3
Student 12	F	10	5	4	5	2
Student 13	F	10	5	5	5	5
Student 14	F	10	4	5	5	5
Student 15	F	10	5	5	5	5
Student 16	F	10	2	5	4	3
Student 17	F	10	5	4	5	3
Student 18	M	10	5	5	5	4
Student 19	M	10	5	5	5	4
Student 20	M	10	5	5	5	5
Student 21	F	11				
Student 22	F	11	4	5	5	3
Student 23	M	11	3	5	3	3
Student 24	M	11	5	4	5	4
Student 25	M	11	4	4	5	3
Student 26	F	12	4	4	4	3
Student 27	F	12	5	4	5	5
Student 28	F	12	4	3	5	4
Student 29	F	12	4	4	5	4
		Average	4.18	4.43	4.61	3.75
		Variance	0.671	0.402	0.766	1.157
		N1 - 1	27	27	27	27

Student Survey - Post Group Data

	Sex	Grade	Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3	Statement 4
Student 1	F	9	5	5	5	5
Student 2	F	9	5	5	5	5
Student 3	F	9	3	4	3	3
Student 4	M	9	4	4	4	3
Student 5	M	9	5	4	5	4
Student 6	M	9	4	5	5	5
Student 7	M	9	4	5	5	4
Student 8	M	9	3	3	3	3

Student 9	M	9	3	4	5	5
Student 10	M	9	5	5	5	4
Student 11	M	9	4	3	5	3
Student 12	F	10	5	3	5	3
Student 13	F	10	5	5	5	5
Student 14	F	10	4	5	5	4
Student 15	F	10	5	5	5	5
Student 16	F	10	3	3	5	3
Student 17	F	10	4	3	5	2
Student 18	M	10	4	4	5	3
Student 19	M	10	3	2	5	3
Student 20	M	10	5	5	5	5
Student 21	F	11				
Student 22	F	11	5	4	5	4
Student 23	M	11	3	3	3	2
Student 24	M	11	5	5	5	4
Student 25	M	11	4	4	5	3
Student 26	F	12	3	4	4	3
Student 27	F	12	4	2	5	5
Student 28	F	12	4	4	3	2
Student 29	F	12	3	3	3	3
		Average	4.07	3.96	4.57	3.68
		Variance	0.661	0.925	0.624	1.041
		N1 - 1	27	27	27	27
Degrees of freedom			54	54	54	54
t-value from table			2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
t-value from data			0.491	2.133	0.160	0.255

Group 1

Student Survey - Pre Group Data

	Sex	Grade	Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3	Statement 4
Student 1	F	9	4	4	5	4
Student 2	F	9				
Student 3	F	9	5	4	5	4
Student 4	F	9	3	5	4	3
Student 5	F	9	4	3	5	4
Student 6	F	9	5	2.5	5	4
Student 7	F	9	5	5	5	4
Student 8	M	9	5	4	5	5
Student 9	M	10				
Student 10	M	11	4	5	4	4
Student 11	M	11	4	5	3	4
Student 12	F	12	3	4	4	3
Student 13	F	12	4	5	5	4
		Average	4.18	4.23	4.55	3.91
		Variance	0.564	0.768	0.473	0.291
		N1 - 1	10	10	10	10

Group 2

Student Survey - Pre Group Data

	Sex	Grade	Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3	Statement 4
Student 1	F	9	4	5	4	4
Student 2	F	9	5	5	5	5
Student 3	F	9	3	4	4	3
Student 4	M	9	4	4	5	4
Student 5	M	9	4	4	5	4
Student 6	M	9	4	5	5	5
Student 7	M	9	3	4	4	2
Student 8	M	9	3	3	1	1
Student 9	M	9	5	5	5	5
Student 10	M	9	4	5	5	4
Student 11	M	9	4	4	5	3
Student 12	F	10	5	4	5	2
Student 13	F	10	5	5	5	5
Student 14	F	10	4	5	5	5
Student 15	F	10	5	5	5	5
Student 16	F	10	2	5	4	3
Student 17	F	10	5	4	5	3
Student 18	M	10	5	5	5	4
Student 19	M	10	5	5	5	4
Student 20	M	10	5	5	5	5
Student 21	F	11				
Student 22	F	11	4	5	5	3
Student 23	M	11	3	5	3	3

Student 24	M	11	5	4	5	4
Student 25	M	11	4	4	5	3
Student 26	F	12	4	4	4	3
Student 27	F	12	5	4	5	5
Student 28	F	12	4	3	5	4
Student 29	F	12	4	4	5	4
		Average	4.18	4.43	4.61	3.75
		Variance	0.671	0.402	0.766	1.157
		N1 - 1	27	27	27	27
Degrees of freedom			37	37	37	37
t-value from table			2.02	2.02	2.02	2.02
t-value from data			0.012	0.694	0.233	0.611

Group 1

Student Survey - Post Group Data

	Sex	Grade	Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3	Statement 4
Student 1	F	9	4	5	5	3
Student 2	F	9				
Student 3	F	9	5	5	5	4
Student 4	F	9	3	5	4	2
Student 5	F	9	4	4	5	4
Student 6	F	9	4	3	5	2.5
Student 7	F	9	5	3	5	5
Student 8	M	9	5	5	5	5
Student 9	M	10				
Student 10	M	11	5	5	5	5
Student 11	M	11	4	4	5	1
Student 12	F	12	4	5	5	4
Student 13	F	12	4	4	5	4
		Average	4.27	4.36	4.91	3.59
		Variance	0.418	0.655	0.091	1.741
		N1 - 1	10	10	10	10

Group 2

Student Survey - Post Group Data

	Sex	Grade	Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3	Statement 4
Student 1	F	9	5	5	5	5
Student 2	F	9	5	5	5	5
Student 3	F	9	3	4	3	3
Student 4	M	9	4	4	4	3
Student 5	M	9	5	4	5	4
Student 6	M	9	4	5	5	5
Student 7	M	9	4	5	5	4
Student 8	M	9	3	3	3	3
Student 9	M	9	3	4	5	5
Student 10	M	9	5	5	5	4
Student 11	M	9	4	3	5	3
Student 12	F	10	5	3	5	3
Student 13	F	10	5	5	5	5
Student 14	F	10	4	5	5	4
Student 15	F	10	5	5	5	5
Student 16	F	10	3	3	5	3
Student 17	F	10	4	3	5	2
Student 18	M	10	4	4	5	3
Student 19	M	10	3	2	5	3
Student 20	M	10	5	5	5	5
Student 21	F	11				
Student 22	F	11	5	4	5	4
Student 23	M	11	3	3	3	2

Student 24	M	11	5	5	5	4
Student 25	M	11	4	4	5	3
Student 26	F	12	3	4	4	3
Student 27	F	12	4	2	5	5
Student 28	F	12	4	4	3	2
Student 29	F	12	3	3	3	3
		Average	4.07	3.96	4.57	3.68
		Variance	0.661	0.925	0.624	1.041
		N1 - 1	27	27	27	27
Degrees of freedom			37	37	37	37
t-value from table			2.02	2.02	2.02	2.02
t-value from data			0.811	1.313	1.931	0.198

Appendix E

Group 1

Pre- and Post Group GPA Data

	Sex	Grade	GPA - Pre	GPA - Post	Δ GPA
Student 1	F	9	79.1	87.9	8.8
Student 2	F	9			
Student 3	F	9	82.2	79.6	-2.6
Student 4	F	9	70.3	72.3	2.0
Student 5	F	9	95.4	97.7	2.3
Student 6	F	9	70.9	74.5	3.6
Student 7	F	9	80.0	80.0	0.0
Student 8	M	9	81.6	86.6	5.0
Student 9	M	10			
Student 10	M	11	75.2	80.0	4.8
Student 11	M	11	73.0	45.0	-28.0
Student 12	F	12	83.4	87.6	4.2
Student 13	F	12	91.9	94.5	2.6
		Avg.	80.27	80.52	

Group 2

Pre- and Post Group GPA Data

	Sex	Grade	GPA - Pre	GPA - Post	Δ GPA
Student 1	F	9	88.4	85.2	-3.2
Student 2	F	9	94.6	98.0	3.4
Student 3	F	9	93.6	98.0	4.4
Student 4	M	9	86.7	91.5	4.8
Student 5	M	9	80.3	80.3	0.0
Student 6	M	9	70.8	80.0	9.2
Student 7	M	9	93.9	94.8	0.9
Student 8	M	9	86.8	87.6	0.8
Student 9	M	9	73.3	85.6	12.3
Student 10	M	9	86.1	87.4	1.3
Student 11	M	9	93.8	94.3	0.5
Student 12	F	10	65.1	63.7	-1.4
Student 13	F	10	76.6	78.0	1.4
Student 14	F	10	83.6	85.4	1.8
Student 15	F	10	80.8	85.0	4.2
Student 16	F	10	69.9	70.3	0.4
Student 17	F	10	69.2	64.7	-4.5
Student 18	M	10	87.5	90.0	2.5
Student 19	M	10	79.0	71.3	-7.7
Student 20	M	10	78.6	76.7	-1.9
Student 21	F	11			
Student 22	F	11	81.3	80.3	-1.0
Student 23	M	11	85.4	75.8	-9.6
Student 24	M	11	70.0	73.0	3.0

Student 25	M	11	73.5	74.3	0.8
Student 26	F	12	83.7	101.8	18.1
Student 27	F	12	97.7	95.0	-2.7
Student 28	F	12	90.3	91.4	1.1
Student 29	F	12	94.3	97.3	3.0
		Avg.	82.67	84.17	