

Perceptions, Motivations, and Achievement of African American Students
Enrolled in a Middle College High School

By
Lori M. Bruce

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Approved by

[Redacted Signature]

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[Redacted Signature]

ABSTRACT

Lori M. Bruce: *Perceptions, Motivations, and Achievement of African American Students Enrolled in a Middle College High School*

Under the direction of Dr. William Malloy

Historically, African American students have been underserved in our nation's public schools. Due to the accountability expectations of the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, greater awareness and attention has been given to the racial achievement gap and disparities among high school dropouts and postsecondary education. The Middle College High School design has been in existence since 1972, beginning with LaGuardia Community College in Long Island, New York. NCLB accountability has brought more attention to secondary school achievement and a sense of urgency regarding school reform and nontraditional school designs and structures.

Although college campuses are more diverse today than they were 40 years ago, access to postsecondary education, retention, and graduation rates are still closely aligned with income, race, and family educational background. In the past three decades of the middle-college high school concept, the goals of reducing the drop-out rate, increasing graduation and college attendance rates, and improving student performance and self-esteem have been researched and proven effective. A variety of instructional strategies are used to help students make the connection between high school graduation and college or work in a "seamless" curriculum. The primary goals of this nontraditional concept are to focus on the entire student, including nonacademic needs, increase career aspirations, provide positive role models on a college campus, enable students to experience success more often, and instill a hope for the future.

The North Carolina Education Cabinet has set a goal of eliminating the minority achievement gap by the year 2010 as part of the first America Initiative. Failure of public schools to meet the needs of underserved students, many of whom are poor and minority has recently prompted philanthropists such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to commence the Early College High School Initiative, extending the 1972 Middle College concept.

In this study, 12 African American seniors that attended Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) Middle College High School (MCHS) in North Carolina were interviewed about their perceptions regarding their school experiences. Student interviews, school records, and school archival documents were used to analyze the data

within the blended theoretical framework of resiliency and self-efficacy theory created by the researcher. The primary research question in this study was: How do students perceive that the Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High School structure impacted their academic achievement and internal motivation to achieve educational success in high school and pursue postsecondary educational opportunities?

The analysis of the collected research data offered emerging themes, implications for practice, and recommendations from which educators may improve their professional practice. The interpretation of the data revealed four overarching themes from the voices of the 12th grade African American student participants, finding that the school structure at GTCC MCHS: (a) enabled healthy relationships between and among teachers and students, (b) enabled students to identify themselves as smart and mature, (c) gave students close access to college courses and resources to pursue postsecondary opportunities, (d) enabled students to embrace personal responsibility and the self-efficacy necessary to achieve their educational goals.

For my parents and grandparents – thank you for your love, your wisdom, your example, and your faith in me. I recognize and will never forget that it is because of your sacrifice, prayers, and encouragement that I have been able to achieve this goal.

Larry & Gail Bruce
Rosa Dean
Thomas & Melinda Bruce

(adapted from Marianne Williamson's *Releasing Outcome Prayer*
– *Illuminata*, 1994
near the beginning of my research journey on July 17, 2005)

My Dissertation Prayer

Dear God,

I release this goal to you. I know that my tension, my control, and my direction do not serve the project or you. May my resources be used by you; I ask only that your will be done. I have shown up Father; I have done as I have felt you have asked me to do. And now I place all outcomes in your hands. May my efforts gladden you. May my work please you. I am here only to do your bidding, that I might feel lighter, that I and the entire world might be healed.

Amen

Thank you God for everything, I have no complaints.

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Marce and Tyrone, it is my hope that this research makes a contribution to public education that will have a positive impact on my nephew and godson, our precious little prince, Isaiah (*and little sister or brother coming soon, I hope*). Thank you everyone. God Bless.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over 30 years ago, Janet E. Lieberman originated the middle-college concept, which places independent high schools on community college campuses allowing students to have more opportunities to take classes for college credit as well as to complete their high school classes and graduation requirements. The goals of the middle-college high school (MCHS) concept are to: reduce the dropout rate, increase graduation and college attendance rates, improve student performance, increase self-esteem, and help more students make the connection between high school and college.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the North Carolina Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) Middle College High School (MCHS) structure impacted students' academic achievement and internal motivation for educational success. Although the MCHS concept has existed for decades, research regarding these programs have been limited (Donohoo, 2002). Information regarding middle college high schools has often times surfaced through various program evaluations and mainstream articles about the structure and organization such as *Newsweek's* article, "The Future is In Their Hands," (Kantrowitz, 2006) which highlights GTCC MCHS as an example of how North Carolina is making efforts towards creating a 21st century workforce with the goal of students graduating with the skills needed to succeed in college and the workplace.

The strategy of research for this qualitative case study was phenomenology, the exploration of a lived experience. This approach provides a description of the experiences and interpretive understandings of the individual (Tesch, 1987). This study explored the

impact of the GTCC MCHS structure based on the student perceptions gathered through interviews and a document review of participants' school records. The population of this study consisted of 12 African American seniors that attended GTCC MCHS, preparing for graduation in June 2006. Common themes were developed through the lens of a blended theoretical framework, created by the author, based on resiliency and self-efficacy theory.

The 2005 study of Middle College High Schools in California used reflective phenomenology research methods to gather, analyze, and establish themes from student open-ended interview questions and quantitative data including the California Assessment Test and the California High School Exit Exam (Smoot, 2005). The California research study addressed perspectives of students in the middle college high school program regarding their perceptions of the MCHS program and the factors of MCHS they believed contributed to their success in school. The four dominant themes that emerged from Smoot's study were the importance of support from another person, the importance of intrinsic motivation, the value of public alternative schools, and the value of goal setting and planning for the future. This research study is partially based on Smoot's recommendation that future researchers explore the aspects of the MCHS programs that help set the foundation for development and growth regarding students' sense of self-efficacy for academic success.

Background and Conditions

Noeth and Wimberly's (2002) research and other studies pointed out that in the eighth grade most students expect to attend college and have a professional career, and these educational expectations are consistent across race and social class (Freeman, 1999; Kao &

Tienda, 1998; MacLeod, 1995; Wimberly, 2000). Horn (1997) describes the university program “pipeline” as containing five sequential steps: aspiring to complete at least a bachelor’s degree, becoming academically prepared to enroll in college, taking college entrance examinations, completing college admissions applications, and matriculating. Horn’s research indicated that although approximately 65% of 1992 high school graduates planned to obtain a bachelor’s degree as 10th graders, only 40% accomplished the next four steps leading to 4-year institution enrollment.

According to a study conducted by the Urban Institute and The Civil Rights Project in 2004 at Harvard University, across the nation, less than 70% of students who enter ninth grade will graduate in 4 years with regular diplomas (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004). Although the graduation rate is 75% for White students, only 50% of Black, Latino, and Native American students graduate in 4 years. This study also concluded that graduation rates for minority males are far lower. The Civil Rights Project reported that “because of misleading and inaccurate reporting of dropout and graduation rates, and an exclusive preoccupation with testing data, the public remains largely unaware of this educational civil rights crisis” (Orfield et al., p. 1). Because of the historically large and rapidly growing population of African Americans and other minorities in the Southern states, the graduation crisis among high school students is particularly significant, with the Southern states including the lowest overall graduation rates nationally (Orfield et al).

The “opportunity to learn” element is critical to preparation and success in postsecondary education regardless of the individual efforts and prior knowledge of students (Lezotte, 1997; Sorenson & Hallinan, 1997). The reliance and expectation of African Americans on school resources for various educational support and career guidance is an

important variable in school success. (Epps, 1995; Gandara & Bial, 2001; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Darling-Hammond (2000) urges that educators address policy changes needed to correct systematic, continuous inequalities for minority students by first recognizing the different, substandard educational realities instead of presuming students' race and socioeconomic status, *not their schools*, possess the deficits hindering academic success. Changes in testing policies and curriculum, equalization of financial resources, and improvement of quality teaching staff for all students would be necessary to make an impact (Darling-Hammond).

It is important to understand the “roots” of the comprehensive high school structure dating back to the early 20th century with the intent to serve students entering the workforce as well as academically prepare students for higher education (Martinez & Hammack, 2001). This concept created by Conant intended to provide a greater and more diverse access to secondary educational opportunities, which offered various vocational and educational tracks. Until the 1950s, the comprehensive high school was generally accepted as the most effective way to educate young people and prepare them for the next step in their lives (Martinez & Klopott, 2004).

The 1950s brought attention to the racial inequity in public schools, leading to the 1954 Brown vs. The Board of Education decision of school desegregation. However, “White flight” from cities to the suburbs, left African Americans still racially isolated, with little differences in educational experience outcomes (Mirel, 1993; Orfield, Eaton, & Harvard Project on School Desegregation, 1996; Rury, 1999; Stolee, 1993; Wells & Crain, 1997). It was not until the late 1970s that educators and researchers began to realize that the

comprehensive high school did not serve all students well and began to call for reform efforts.

The philosophical foundation and organization of the traditional high school allow for schools and educators to accept and *expect* a percentage of students to fail. The sorting and selecting process of vocational or college preparatory tracks of the traditional high school reinforced the belief systems that all students were not capable of college expectations (Backstop, 2004; Bennett & Lecompton, 1990; Spring, 1990).

Socioeconomic status affects large number of African American children, and often predicts low track assignment as does race (Lucas, 1999; Mickelson, 2001; Vanfossen, 1987). Data confirms that although 30% of North Carolina's student population is African American, only 13% is enrolled in the most frequently offered Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and only 7% of all students who enrolled in at least one AP course are African American (Darity, Castellino, & Tyson, 2001).

Van de Water and Rainwater (2001) at the Education Commission of the States define a seamless P-16 system as one that represents an integrated concept of education that stretches from early childhood (where P stands for prekindergarten or preschool) through a 4-year college degree (Grade 16). They describe some of the major goals of a seamless P-16 system as smoothing student transitions from one level of learning to the next, closing the achievement gap between White and minority students, strengthening relationships between families and schools, creating a wider range of learning experiences and opportunities for students in the final 2 years of high school, and improving college readiness and college access.

Many African American students and other minorities do not attend college and earn degrees because they do not have access to the personal support networks, informational resources, and other structured programs including regular checkpoints to properly plan for college requirements, the application, and enrollment. To increase the number of minority college attendees and graduates, students should have increased support from their schools, parents, and others to help them plan for postsecondary education and future careers (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Schneider & Stevenson, 1999).

In the past three decades of the middle college high school concept, the goals of reducing the drop-out rate, increasing graduation and college attendance rates, and improving student performance and self-esteem have been researched and proven effective (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000; Heard, 1988; Houston, Byers & Danner, 1992; Leiberman, 1986; Smoot, 2005). A variety of instructional strategies were used to help students make the connection between high school graduation and college or work in a “seamless” curriculum (Conley, 2001; Cullen, 1991; Fine, 1986; Williams, 2000).

In 2003, the Governor’s Office in North Carolina secured an \$11 million grant to redesign and create over 40 new high schools funded primarily by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as well as other private businesses, government institutions, and various foundations, named the “New Schools Project.” In 2004, The North Carolina General Assembly launched another phase, called the “Learn and Earn” program to create more early college high school partnerships with private and public colleges and universities, and community colleges.

Research Question

The following research question will be investigated in this study: How do students perceive that the North Carolina Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High School (GTCC MCHS) structure impacted their academic achievement and internal motivations for educational success?

The following are supporting research questions:

1. What evidence is provided through student interviews to support the existence of resiliency building efforts within the GTCC MCHS structure? (a) providing care and support and (b) setting and communicating high expectations
2. What evidence is provided through student interviews to support the existence of self-efficacy building efforts within the GTCC MCHS structure? (a) performance accomplishments and (b) vicarious experiences

In this study, academic achievement was examined through student perceptions about their academic achievement, and school records data including the number of college courses taken, grade point averages (GPA) before and after GTCC MCHS enrollment, and attendance. Internal motivation for educational success was examined by student perceptions of their academic identity at GTCC MCHS, postsecondary educational plans, and personal action steps toward educational success while in high school and beyond.

Significance of the Study

High school reform has been the focus of many school districts across the nation due to results and consequences of high accountability standards set on the local, state, and national levels. Data on all three levels suggest that African American students are not being

served in their schools as well as other racial demographic groups, and are minimally prepared to enter postsecondary education or the work force. One of the primary reasons for urgency in the high school reform movement is to better educate and provide better postsecondary preparation for traditionally underserved demographic groups through nontraditional instructional strategies such as smaller learning communities and middle college high schools.

Darling-Hammond (1997) warned society of the presumption that inequality in education resides in the students who come to school unprepared, and distract the public and educators from creating school reform strategies that change the rigor, quality, and quantity of learning opportunities for students. Darling-Hammond also stated that “a school reform that would improve the achievement of students of color would be one that assures them access to high quality teaching within the context of a rich and challenging curriculum supported by personalized schools and classes” (p. 276).

Research has indicated that students attending middle and early college high schools left with a greater sense of personal responsibility for their education and higher levels of motivation for learning, and reduced the total amount of time required to graduate from college (Lieberman, 1986, 1998; Middle College Consortium, 2002). The North Carolina Education Cabinet has set a goal of eliminating the minority achievement gap by the year 2010 as part of the First in America Initiative. The goals of the middle college high school concept are to reduce the dropout rate, increase graduation and college attendance rates, improve student performance, increase self-esteem, and help more students make the connection between high school and college.

Children who are poor or of color are considered one of the most marginalized and least powerful groups in the United States (Edelman, 1992). A major source of inspiration for this phenomenological study was the following Cook-Sather (2002) quote:

Since the advent of formal education in the United States, both the educational system and that system's every reform have been premised on adults' notions of how education should be conceptualized and practiced. There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at some point those it ostensibly designed to serve. Authorizing student perspectives introduces into critical conversations the missing perspectives of those who experience daily the effects of existing educational policies-in-practice. (p. 3)
The significance of this study is to add to the scholarly literature concerning high

school aged African American students, resiliency theory, self-efficacy theory, and to provide information to school district administrators and various levels of educational policy makers seeking to improve African American student achievement and postsecondary education preparation, as follows:

1. There has been a paucity of research conducted to examine African American student perceptions of their middle college high school experiences.
2. There has been a paucity of research conducted to examine the academic achievement of African American students while attending middle college high schools.
3. There has been a paucity of research conducted to examine resiliency building intervention strategies of African American students attending middle college high schools.
4. There has been a paucity of research conducted to examine the existence of self-efficacy building sources within the structure of middle college high schools.

Blended Theoretical Framework

This section will give a brief overview of the blended theoretical framework including the components of resiliency and self-efficacy theory. Chapter 2 will provide more

in-depth information regarding resiliency and self-efficacy, and its relationship with the research question. The Middle College High School goals, and specifically the Guilford Technical Community College MCHS goals including student success while in high school and enhancing students' connection to college for educational success after high school is appropriately aligned to the blended theoretical framework created to better understand how this unique school environment provided students the necessary "protective" factors to educationally succeed while overcoming adversity, as well as how the environment provided students with opportunities to increase their personal self-efficacy to take ownership and "approach" future educational opportunities.

Resiliency Theory

Resilience is a construct that describes the ability to avoid negative pitfalls, "bounce back," although one is exposed to high levels of adversity. Educational resilience is the likelihood of school success despite adversities and personal vulnerabilities within experiences and environmental conditions (Wang & Gordon, 1994). Resiliency theoretical frameworks allow educators to discover how and why students succeed in school, rather than identifying the achievement gap between other groups of students (Schussler, 2002). Schools can develop strategies to create organizational features and identify potential changes to practices and policies that may promote academic resilience (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Schussler, 2002).

The resiliency wheel developed by Henderson and Milstein (2003) contains a six-step intervention strategy to develop resiliency contained in six quadrants. The wheel includes two sides representing strategies to "build resiliency in the environment" and strategies to "mitigate risk factors in the environment." The three quadrants on the left side

of the wheel regarding building resiliency includes: providing caring and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation. The three quadrants on the right side of the wheel regarding mitigating risk factors include: teaching life skills, setting clear and consistent boundaries, and increasing pro-social bonding.

Resiliency is an appropriate theoretical framework for this research question because it offers a more positive perspective on what schools are doing to promote desirable skills and behaviors in students rather than the deficits that exist within the students or the school structure. For this study, the researcher chose two components from the Henderson and Milstein wheel for building resiliency in the environment to include in the blended theoretical framework: (a) providing care and support and (b) setting and communicating high expectations. The first component was chosen for this study because caring and personalization are themes that appear consistently in the effective schools literature (Fiske, 1991). The second component was chosen because of its relationship to the academic rigor and expectations of the middle college high school location on a college campus.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy theory stems from social-cognitive psychological theory, assuming that people will seek out tasks they feel competent and confident and avoid tasks they do not feel competent and confident. Self-efficacy expectations are learned and modified by experiences and processing of information. Sources of self-efficacy interventions include: performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasions, and emotional arousal. Bandura asserted that designing interventions to increase self-efficacy expectations by attending to the sources of efficacy information should increase approach versus avoidant

behavior (Bandura, 1977). Pajares (1996) wrote efficacy beliefs determine the amount of effort people will exert on an activity, perseverance when confronting obstacles, and their resiliency in adverse situations. Therefore, when efficacy is at higher levels, the greater the persistence, effort, and resilience.

It is important to differentiate between self-efficacy and self-concept. Self-concept includes how an individual sees herself, how an individual would like to see herself, and how an individual presents herself to others (Rosenberg, 1979). Self-concept includes *general* attitudes about herself and her general outlook on life. Self-efficacy is domain and task *specific*. Self-efficacy beliefs of individuals are predictors and strong determinants of final accomplishments; therefore they are a major factor in human agency. The most functional efficacy decisions and judgments are those that lead people to engage in realistically challenging tasks that slightly exceed what one is capable of doing at a given time that also further develops their skills and capabilities (Bandura, 1986). For this study, the researcher chose two sources of self-efficacy for the blended theoretical framework: (a) performance accomplishments and (b) vicarious experiences.

The first source was chosen for this study because Bandura (1977, 1982) believed performance accomplishments to be the most powerful source of self-efficacy expectations. These accomplishments are associated with personal mastery experiences, which often lead to seeking out greater task successes (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Students who believe they are competent display greater intrinsic motivation than students who perceive their competence as lower (Boggiano, Main, & Katz, 1988; Gottfried, 1985, 1990). With respect to rigor, Harter's (1978, 1981) studies concluded that children judged their own competence as higher and enjoyed greater pleasure from learning when they succeeded in more difficult

tasks. The second self-efficacy source for this study, vicarious experiences, involving the observation of other people's performance behaviors was chosen because Bandura (1986) believed that these experiences to be the most influential when the individual observes others believed to have characteristics similar to herself, especially when the observing individual is uncertain about their own abilities. Most of the participants in this study were not doing well academically at their former traditional secondary school and did not perceive themselves as successful high school students, much less potentially successful college students. The "power of the site" is a critical aspect of the middle college high school philosophy.

Framework Rationale

In the book, *Resilient Classrooms: Creating Healthy Environment for Learning* (Doll, Zucker, & Brehm, 2004), the authors' notions align with Alfred Bandura (1986), the father of self-efficacy research, that "academic efficacy emerges out of the opportunities to tackle challenging learning tasks with the instructional supports that make success likely" (p.10). Frank Pajares (2002), a leader in the self-efficacy research field, suggests that more qualitative studies are needed to explore student perceptions on how self-efficacy beliefs influence academic paths, academic attainment, and how these beliefs influence students' effort, choices, perseverance, persistence, and resiliency. Pajares also wrote about the need for future research to explore the role of schools as social systems for cultivating student efficacy beliefs and greater "intertheoretical crosstalk" and investigative collaboration to develop more complete understandings of motivational constructs.

The theoretical concepts and research regarding the relationship between intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and resilience makes a plausible connection with research shared

later on in the literature review concerning racial identity development and the educational environment (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990) as well as Borman and Rachuba's (2001) work that concluded that it is especially important for African American students that the educational environment promote resiliency strategies in an effort to increase academic self-efficacy and internal locus of control. The concept of racial socialization and racial identity development in a hostile societal environment impacts African American students' navigation through experiences, which affect perceived life options and chances of succeeding (Boykin & Toms, 1985; McCreary, Slavin, Berry, 1996; Stevenson, 1994).

Limitations of the Study

The present study has several limitations with respect to the study sample, location, theoretical framework, and methods:

1. This study will be limited to 12 African American seniors attending one school site only—GTCC MCHS.
2. This study will not conduct a comparison between GTCC MCHS and another comparable middle college high school located in Guilford County.
3. This study will not conduct a comparison between GTCC MCHS and another comparable middle college high school located in North Carolina.
4. This study will not conduct a comparison between GTCC MCHS and other schools in Guilford County.
5. This study will not conduct any racial comparisons between the student participants and other GTCC MCHS or other Guilford County high school students.

6. This study used only two of six components of the Henderson and Milstein Resiliency Wheel (2003).

7. This study used only two of the four sources of self-efficacy building interventions (Bandura, 1977).

8. This study relied heavily on self-reported student perceptions on their school experiences.

9. This study sample size of 12 student interviews may present difficulties in making significant generalizations pertaining to the findings.

Definitions

For this study, the following terms will be defined as listed below:

Dropout Student is defined as a student who has made the decision to stop attending school.

Early College is defined as the collaborative effort by local public schools and community colleges to provide an alternative learning environment for high school aged students. A small high school that is located on a university college campus. The goal of early college high schools is for students to graduate with an associate's degree or complete a significant amount of coursework towards a bachelor's degree.

Educational Resilience is defined as the heightened likelihood of educational success despite personal vulnerabilities and adversities brought about by environmental conditions and experiences.

Extrinsic Motivation is defined as motivation to engage in an activity as a means to an end.

Intrinsic Motivation is defined as motivation to engage in an activity for its own sake.

Middle College is defined as the collaborative effort by local public schools and community colleges to provide an alternative learning environment for high school aged students. A small high school that is located on a community college campus.

P-16 System is defined as an integrated concept of education that stretches from early childhood (where P stands for prekindergarten or preschool) through a 4-year college degree (Grade 16).

Resilience is defined as a multifaceted, complex phenomenon that enables an individual to succeed despite adverse conditions or outcomes. The process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging circumstances.

Resiliency Theory is defined as the protective factors within the family, school, and community that exist for the resilient child or adolescent who are missing from the family, school, and community of the child or adolescent who later receives intervention.

Self-Efficacy is defined as a domain and task specific belief about one's abilities, a major factor in human agency.

Self-Efficacy Theory is defined as the self-reflection process that evaluates experiences and thought processes; therefore, how a person thinks about themselves mediates between their knowledge and future action.

Summary of Procedures and Methods

This study was designed as a qualitative case study. The intent of qualitative research is through investigation, to gain greater understanding of an interaction, event, group, role,

or social situation to progressively make sense of social phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The general procedures that will be used for this study are presented below. Chapter 3 will present a more in-depth discussion of the methodology.

The Guilford County School District was the first in North Carolina to create a middle college high school. This case study explored 12 African –American 12th grade student perceptions at the first middle college high school opened in the school district – Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High school (GTCC MCHS). The 12 identified African American students were interviewed about their perceptions, motivations, and achievement at GTCC MCHS. Student interview questions were derived from two intervention strategies from Henderson and Milstein’s (2003) resiliency wheel and two self-efficacy sources from the research of Bandura (1986) and Pajares (1996). The forming of interview questions was borrowed from the principles of “responsive interviewing” as described in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Responsive interviewing is described as an interactive and dynamic process in qualitative research versus a mechanically applied “tool set.” The interview is described as a “structured conversation” and is organized by main, follow-up, and probing questions.

Audio-taped student interview transcripts and student records including course selection, grades, and attendance before and after GTCC MCHS were analyzed to derive patterns and common themes in the collected data, as well as to note any differences in actual and self-reported perceptions of academic achievement and action toward postsecondary opportunities. The GTCC MCHS 2005-2008 School Improvement Plan was also reviewed to gain a research context for the belief systems and objectives of the research

site. Comparisons and generalizations were made and identified in the final chapter of this study.

Chapter 2, a review of the literature, will serve as a framework for understanding the context of how many African Americans are educated in public schools, as well as present some of the research, theory, and change initiatives related to high school reform. The last part of the chapter will provide more depth regarding the blended theoretical framework created for this study including resiliency and self-efficacy theory.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of the literature in this chapter is divided into five major sections. The first section of this chapter will address contextual research regarding minority student achievement, including the racial achievement gap. The second section of this chapter contains the historical research related to the traditional comprehensive high school and factors of the high school reform movement. The third section of this chapter pertains to the post secondary opportunities for high school students, including the recent preschool through college (P16) movement. The fourth section, offers the historical background, necessary support, and implementation factors regarding middle college high schools in the United States and specifically in North Carolina. The fifth and final chapter explains the two strands of the blended theoretical framework, including resiliency and self-efficacy theory.

Minority Student Achievement

This section will provide an overview of the literature regarding achievement in schools for minorities, the North Carolina goals to eliminate the racial achievement gap, success factors for minority students in school, and the components related to college choice and retention among minority students.

The Achievement Gap

The academic achievement gap between children of color and White students may be the most critical problem to solve in public education (Slavin & Madden, 2001). Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that 17-year-old Latino and

African American students are performing at the same level as 13-year-old White students (Campbell, Hombo, & Mazzeo, 2000). As Campbel et al. suggested, “If African American, Latino, and other minority students performed in school at the same level as Whites, the broad social impact would be profound, almost certainly affecting the socioeconomic status of minority individuals, college admissions, and ultimately segregation, prejudice, and racial tension” (p. 4).

The North Carolina Education Cabinet has set a goal of eliminating the minority achievement gap by the year 2010 as part of the First in America Initiative. Strategies planned to reduce the gap include: ensuring that quality educators are teaching African American students, equitable classroom sizes and grouping in elementary schools, and academically focused, high quality early childhood education. These strategies would ensure that African American students are represented equitably across all high school curriculum tracks, would be exposed to culturally appropriate discipline and teaching practices, greater home and school communication, access to more individual tutoring and follow-up assistance, and summer programs. These steps would result in more comprehensive reform efforts, school desegregation, and building more effective programs within schools (Thompson & Quinn, 2001).

Socioeconomic status affects large number of African American children, and often predicts low track assignment as does race (Mickelson, 2001, Lucas, 1999, Vanfossen, 1987). Data confirm that although 30% of North Carolina’s student population is African American, only 13% is enrolled in the most frequently offered Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and only 7% of all students who enrolled in at least one AP course are African American (Darity, Castellino, & Tyson, 2001).

Although some educators are concerned about equalizing the proportions of minority students into higher-level courses could set students up for discouragement and failure, research suggests otherwise. When African Americans take college-oriented, rigorous courses, test scores increase, and the drop out rate for African Americans decrease (Thompson & Quinn, 2001). Access to the opportunities for students placed in upper tracks are often not available for lower track students. The nonequitable proportions of minority lower track students will only widen the existing achievement gap between White and Black students (Thompson & Quinn, 2001).

Success Factors for Minority Students

Steele's (1992) research indicated that the pressure for minority students in challenging situations is doubled than for other ethnic groups. Steele also claimed that "stereotype threat" of failing academically confirms society's negative stereotype regarding intelligence for people of color. Often times, minority students choose to avoid the threat, become indifferent, and disengage from school to avoid potential damage to their self-esteem and failure (Steele & Aronson, 1998).

Darling-Hammond (2000) urged educators to address policy changes needed to erase systematic, continuous inequalities for minority students by first recognizing the different, substandard educational realities instead of presuming students' race and socioeconomic status, not their schools, possess the deficits hindering academic success. Changes in testing policies and curriculum, equalization of financial resources, and improvement of quality teaching staff for all students would be necessary to make an impact (Darling-Hammond).

The "opportunity to learn" element is critical to preparation and success in postsecondary education regardless of the individual efforts and prior knowledge of students

(Lezzotte, 1997; Sorenson & Hallinan, 1997). The reliance and expectation of African Americans on school resources for various educational support and career guidance is an important variable in school success (Epps, 1995; Gandara & Bial, 2001; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Components of College Choice and Retention

Research has indicated that consistently across both social class and race, most eighth graders expect to attend college and develop a professional career (Freeman, 1999, Kao & Tienda, 1998; MacLeod, 1995; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Wimberly, 2000). School reform efforts should develop strategies to increase the underrepresentation of first-generation college goers and minorities in obtaining associates and bachelor's degrees (Barton, 2002).

Examining the predictors of college success for minority students suggest that grade point average and class rank in high school were more important than standardized test scores in determining retention beyond the freshman year (Flaxman, 1983; Moline, 1987; Sanford, 1981; Whiley, 1983). Other research adds that fitting in, social adjustment, and feeling attached to college, especially when students of color attend predominantly nonminority institutions, are critical factors to retention and graduation (Astin, 1993, 1975; Schwartz & Washington, 2002; Tinto, 1987). Additional research concluded that educational expectations students have of themselves is one of the most significant predictors of enrollment for college and success (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; McDonough, 1997). Participation in the AVID program has proven to motivate students to pursue college and maintain grades because of the program fostering a belief, possibility, and expectation of postsecondary success (Mehan,, Villanueva, & Lintz, 1996).

Research has suggested that policymakers and educators recognize the different racial and cultural influences affecting postsecondary planning and decision making, to help support students actualize their academic and professional dreams (Anderson & Hearn, 1992; Freeman, 1999; Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). The “pipeline” to a university program has five sequential steps: aspiring to complete at least a bachelor’s degree, becoming academically prepared to enroll in college, taking college entrance examinations, completing college admissions applications, and matriculating (Horn, 1997). Horn’s research indicated that although approximately 65% of all 1992 high school graduates planned to obtain a bachelor’s degree as 10th graders, only 40% accomplished the next four steps leading to 4-year institution enrollment.

Many African American students and other minorities do not attend college and earn degrees because they do not have access to the personal support networks, informational resources, or other structured programs including regular checkpoints to properly plan for college requirements, application, and enrollment. To increase the number of minority college attendees and graduates, students should have increased support from their schools, parents, and others to help them plan for postsecondary education and future careers (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Schneider & Stevenson, 1999).

Academic Impact of the Traditional High School

By the year 2050, the United States will experience one of the most drastic demographic changes in history. The nation will become “majority minority” and continued income and academic achievement gaps will disrupt increased democracy (Pennington, 2004). Although college campuses are more diverse today than they were 40 years ago, access to postsecondary education, retention, and graduation rates are still closely aligned

with income, race, and family educational background (Hoffman, 2003). The 1999 “Reaching the Top” report recommended that federal, state, and local educational leaders prioritize raising achievement levels of minority high school students on the reform agenda.

The 2004 Civil Rights Project at Harvard’s collaboration with the Urban Institute provided daunting statistics on the state of minority students in the current, traditional high school system. Many minority and poor students fall out of the high school graduation pipeline in disproportionate numbers. Nationally, 68% of students entering the ninth grade will graduate in 4 years. In 4 years of high school, Whites graduate 75% of their students, and only 50% of African American, Native American, and Latino students will earn regular high school diplomas in 4 years. Minority males are graduating from high school at even lower rates.

The project recognized that the general public tends to be misled by inaccurate reporting of graduation and dropout rates and therefore is not aware of the “crisis” of educational civil rights with regard to poor children and students of color. States in the South need more critical examination because of the rate of growth, the historically large majority of African American people, and the lowest graduation numbers in the country.

Harrison (1993) drew from the work of Bourdieu to express that oppression and domination are not only related to inequity of material goods distribution, but also the principles of social classification. Entitlement of certain racial, economic, and cultural capital groups is one of the strongest social classifications, legitimizing their status (Yonezawa, Wells, & Serna, 2002). Labels given to children by educational institutions further legitimize the social stratification process at a young age, such as “advanced” or

“gifted and talented” (Barr & Dreeben, 1983; Gamoran, 1986; Good & Brophy, 1987; Slavin, 1987).

Student labels also affect friendships within academic tracks and continue socioeconomic and racial segregation from elementary to secondary school (Hallinan & Sorenson, 1985; Hallinan & Williams, 1989). This unintended consequence of early labeling enables within-school segregation and denies poor and minority students’ access to higher education information support systems and networks (Braddock & Slavin, 1993; Cooper, 1996, Wells & Crain, 1994).

Although school systems are becoming more aware of the damaging effects of tracking and are working to reduce the institutionalized barriers such as prerequisites to higher level classes and guidance counselor encouragement, research has suggested that these methods are unlikely to change drastically track stratification because these methods do not sufficiently address student self-identity and finding an accepted place in the academic and community hierarchy (Yonezawa, Wells, & Serna, 2002).

An example of this cultural and identity link is a study of six high schools where minority and low-track students consistently did not take advantage of honors courses made more available to them. Researchers cited various reasons: institutional barriers, unwelcome feelings in majority-White honors courses, feelings of inadequacy, and a determination to remain in the familiar safe classes predominantly made up of minority students (Yonezawa, Wells, & Serna, 2002). This observation concludes that educators must pay attention to the existing institutional hierarchies and how it affects student self-perceptions and feelings of belonging. Genuine de-tracking efforts must involve reflection of why educational institutions continue the destructive and divisive student sorting process and how our

institutions influence and define student identities and opportunities within the current traditional structure.

Graduation, Dropout, and College Access

Dropping out of high school not only has negative consequences for individual students, but also negatively affects the entire country, both socially and economically (Asche, 1993; Carter, 2004). Consequences of non-high school completion include major income gaps between dropouts and completers that are expected to increasingly widen due to new requirements to compete in the global economy such as an increased need for literacy skills, technological skills, more education, and the expectation of lifelong learning. Growing dropout rates including a disproportionate amount of minority and poor students threatens democracy and creates an American underclass (Asche, 1993; Carter, 2004).

Mann (1987) coined the term “pushout” to differentiate with “dropouts.” “Dropouts are children who failed to learn, and pushouts result from schools that failed to teach” (p. 5). Mann concluded that educational institutions should distinguish between students who chose to leave school due to personal reasons versus students who chose to leave based on their experiences in school. College graduates earn 70% more income than students who do not graduate from high school. Carnevale and Desrochers’ (2001) research indicated that even 1 year of education beyond high school increases earnings over a lifetime. On average, the minimum of education needed to obtain jobs that pay enough money to create and sustain a family is at least 2 years of education beyond high school (Pennington, 2003).

Research has indicated that the organization of the school instructional program impacts the dropout rate and retention of students at-risk of not completing high school (Carter, 2004). Successful components of schools serving potential dropout students include

eliminating tracking, promoting partnerships with businesses and community learning organizations, strategic and careful staff selection process, engaging parents, students, and staff in school goals, flexible scheduling and programming, appropriate staff development, college and high school collaboration, and clear accountability procedures for potential student dropouts (Asche, 1993; Bickel, Bond, LeMahieu, 1986; Dryfoos, 1990; Peck, Law, & Mills, 1987; Smink, 1990). Various researchers also suggested that high dropout rates rarely exist in schools that are characterized as orderly, safe, nonthreatening, and accessible.

Databases created from the High School and Beyond NELS information in the past 10 years indicate the following reasons why students choose to leave school: a belief that educators did not personally or academically care about them (Altenbaugh, 1998; Bryk & Thum, 1990; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986); a lack of school activity participation (Catterall, 1998; Finn, 1989); low standardized test scores or grades (Catterall; Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986); low classroom discussion engagement (Bryk & Thum, 1990; Wehlage, 1992); and the perception that they did not have the knowledge or skills to graduate from high school (Catterall). All of the various reasons indicate that students leave school because they do not feel a connection socially, academically, or personally to the school environment (Schussler, 2002).

Finn's 1989 literature review of numerous studies between 1964 and 1988 concluded that a student's decision to drop out of high school is a developmental process. When students experience repeated school failure over many years, it is difficult for students to academically recover and they often engage in deviant, attention-seeking behavior to compensate for a low self-concept regarding academics (Roderick & Camburn, 1999). When students do not feel a connection to school by conforming, they seek greater self-esteem

through disruptive nonconforming behaviors, which often leads to dropping out of school. Wehlage and Rutter's 1986 research concluded that the self-esteem of frustrated, marginalized students increased after their decision to drop out of school, due to their removal from the negative school environment.

High School and the Reform Journey

This section will be broken into three sections: An overview and history of the comprehensive high school, the impact of the traditional high school on minority students, and the urgency of high school reform for increased student achievement. The first section will provide an overview of the comprehensive high schools' century old model and the organizational design of sorting and selecting students. The second section provides data related to the achievement, graduation rate, dropout statistics, and college access opportunities for minority students. The third section provides aspects related to the urgency of high school reform including: *Breaking Ranks* (1996), the high school reform movement in North Carolina, new visions of reform such as the P16 movement, seamless transitions, smaller schools and learning communities, college credit options, and the community college impact of high school reform.

Overview and History of the Comprehensive High School

The early 20th century created the comprehensive high school with the intent to serve students to enter the workforce as well as academically prepare students for higher education (Hammack, 2001). This new concept created by Conant intended to provide greater and more diverse access to secondary educational opportunities and offered various vocational and educational tracks. The comprehensive high school was based on the

common school idea (Hampel, 1986; Krug, 1972) as defined by the 1918 Cardinal Principles Report. Until the 1950s, the comprehensive high school was generally accepted as the most effective way to educate young people and prepare them for the next steps in their lives (Martinez & Klopott, 2004).

Although, this concept attempts to represent democratic and equality ideals with students experiencing common core subject areas, the curricular foundation of the comprehensive high school was differentiation through ability grouping, accepting that individual students were destined to provide a variety of occupational roles in society (Rury, 2002). Conant was an advocate of ability grouping and also believed that certain subjects, such as civics, should be taught to all students across a variety of tracks and ability levels (Conant, 1959). Conant did not believe that small schools could produce the same higher-level academic standards as in larger high schools; therefore, he was an advocate for school consolidation, especially in rural areas. He proposed that schools serving over 1,000 students enabled the diversity necessary for academic specialization. Kliebard (1995) describes this practice as “social efficiency” to sort and select students into a variety of social strata.

In the 1950s, racial equity in public schools became the major focus, especially in urban school districts (Kantor & Brenzel, 1993; Rury, 1999). School desegregation and the 1954 *Brown vs. The Board of Education* decision became the center of the beginning stages of the Civil Rights movement. Conflicts became greater as urban school districts became primarily populated with African American students, especially in the large northern cities (Rury, 1999). The racially segregated schools mirrored the residential patterns of African Americans in the cities and “White flight” in the suburbs (Orfield, Eaton, & Harvard Project on School Desegregation, 1996; Rury, 1999). As schools began to desegregate, African

American students still suffered from racial isolation and felt major outcomes differences in their educational experience (Mirel, 1993; Stolee, 1993; Wells & Crain, 1997).

It was not until the late 1970s that educators and researchers began to realize that the comprehensive high school did not serve all students well and began to call for reform efforts. Educational associations and commissions such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Commission on Educational Issues of the National Association of Independent Schools, and the National Commission on Excellence in Education were leaders in the call for high school reform efforts (Martinez & Bray, 2002). The reports written by education groups criticized comprehensive high schools for not providing necessary support, academic rigor, or guidance to adequately prepare all students for civic and economic life after high school.

Although Conant's original idea of the comprehensive high school serving as a tool for democratic ideals, by the 1970s, it became more apparent that the concept had evolved into an educational environment that enabled racial alienation and isolation.

Organization of the Traditional High School

The sorting and selecting process of vocational or college preparatory tracks of the traditional high school reinforced the belief systems that all students were not capable of college expectations (Backstrom, 2004; Bennett & LeCompte, 1990; Spring, 1990). Educators also believed that by providing identified lower-level students with less rigorous curriculum protected the students from failure and disappointment (Backstrom, 2004). This belief system and sorting process has not proven effective in the current global economy's

need for complex training in the technological and information age (Tucker & Coddington, 1998).

The philosophical foundation and organization of the traditional high school allow for schools and educators to accept and expect for a percentage of students to fail. Linda Darling-Hammond (1997) wrote that many educators believe that only smart students can “think,” and other students need only to receive instruction in basic skills. Although student attendance is encouraged, academic rigor, and critical thinking is not as important (Darling Hammond, 1997; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985). Noddington’s (1992) work expressed similar conclusions that traditional schools do not view students as whole beings, but departmentalize them, instead of addressing their psychological, emotional, and physical needs as necessary conditions for effective teaching and learning. Attending *only* to students’ cognitive needs is not only impossible to do, but contradictory to proven effective teaching methods (Levine, 2002). Backstrom (1992) continued this notion: “It does not seem that teachers in larger schools do not know how to support student’s needs, but that they generally work in structures that inhibit that from happening” (p.124).

Tracking is generally defined as the student grouping based on presumed achievement or ability into several differentiated curriculums (Braddock & Dawkins, 1993; Gamoran & Mare, 1989; Oakes, 1985; Yonezawa, Wells, & Serna, 2002). De-tracking is generally defined as grouping students based on “mixed ability” or “heterogeneous.” De-tracking is also defined as the encouragement of low-ability students to select more challenging courses and removing some unnecessary prerequisites (Wheelock, 1992). Although one of the goals of the comprehensive high school was to bring students together,

over time it has become more apparent that the concept has continued to separate young people by race and social class (Mora, 1997; Wells and Crain, 1997).

High School Reform

The Reaching the Top report (1999) encourages educational leaders at the federal, state, and local levels to place top priority on increasing the achievement levels of minority students on the high school reform initiatives. To support the priority, the report suggests reform efforts be evaluated based on how such efforts affect the goal of increasing the number of minority students in higher-level classes and preparation for postsecondary educational opportunities.

The urgency to transform America's high schools is paralleled by the research suggesting that improving student learning be the foundation of high school reform initiatives (Lachat, 2001). *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* (NASSP, 1996), is one of the most widely utilized frameworks for changing the traditional, comprehensive high school model, which more and more educators are realizing has not served or prepared all students well. *Breaking Ranks and High School Reform* was written through collaborative efforts from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 1996) in partnership with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The foundational elements of the recommendations in the book include: responding to diverse learners, personalizing programs, providing connections to the real world, and increasing rigor in the classroom.

The Reaching the Top report (1999) suggested that programs be evaluated in a variety of school settings including schools with middle class, low minority, and poor

populations as well as school environments with a high concentration of economically disadvantaged and minority students. Darling-Hammond (2002) urged educators and policy makers to recognize the institutionalized, systematic inequalities that are strong barriers to authentic educational reform. She proposed that a lack of understanding that school learning opportunities are structured based on race and class, carries on the presumption that individual students and their families, not the educational system, are responsible for the inequality of educational outcomes among different student groups. In order for achievement levels to change for underserved students, reform efforts must change the quantity and quality of learning opportunities, by improving the supply of qualified teachers, equalizing monetary resources, and changing assessment and curriculum policies.

According to Christopher Swanson of the Urban Institute in collaboration with the Harvard Civil Rights Project report (2004), the 16 Southern states that exercised legal segregation before the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 2002 only graduated 64.5% of students, lower than the national average. In addition, only 56.3% of Latinos and 55.3% of African American graduated in 4 years, compared to 82.2% of Asians, and 70.5% of White students (EPC Policy Bulletin, 2005). Identified Southern states include Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and West Virginia. Of all minority students in the Southern region, 46% of the schools they attend are functioning with low graduation rates; therefore graduating from high school is not the normal experience or expectation. Overall, minority students have a probability 10 times greater than Whites to attend a high school with low graduation rates.

According to the National Association of State Budget Officers in 2000, the Southern region with the lowest graduation rates, increased prison related spending between 1980 and 2000, from 60% in North Carolina to 201% in Mississippi. According to a research study of dropouts in five Southern states during the 2002-2003 school year, the 114,383 students reported as dropouts will accrue almost 3 billion dollars in lost wages (Lochner & Moretti, 2003). These statistics are particularly disturbing due to the disproportionate number of African Americans and Latinos who do not graduate from high school and who are in prison.

In the past, general school reform efforts have targeted kindergarten through eighth grades, with the hopes that high achievement would “trickle up” to the high school. The institution of the American high school faces a great deal of change opposition due to the traditions and flawed belief systems relating to the potential of all students. Hoffman outlined the five major barriers to high school reform efforts: academic student support, funding, curricular alignment, governance, and Carnegie unit/credit reconciliation. Strategic and systematic structural changes in teaching and learning are complex, but necessary for authentic improvement in the outcomes of high school students. The success of high school reform efforts and intentions should be the expectation of a result in more high school students leaving our institutions with a high school diploma that adequately prepares all students for careers they are inspired to pursue and postsecondary success.

New Visions

The new vision of the American high school is much different than the traditional secondary paradigm that has existed for over a century and requires a commitment to student results and accountability. Pennington’s report *Better and Faster* (2002) suggests

that public policy create a system of multiple pathways for students, by creating different pedagogical approaches, different amounts of time, and varying institutional arrangements to fit the diverse needs of students.

By accelerating students through the last 2 years of high school and first 2 years of college more efficiently and faster, the transition for students increases the probability that a smaller number of young people will fall between the cracks, and more students will complete a postsecondary program. Pennington (2004) believes the strategic variability of instructional services would produce more consistency in student achievement results. Many critics find it difficult to understand how students who traditionally have been identified as needing remediation should instead be accelerated through the educational pipeline. Pennington communicates that educators must learn to accelerate, while *remediating*, to have the greatest end results for student success.

Postsecondary Preparation

Seamless Transitions and the P16 Movement

The P-16 system is defined by Van de Water and Rainwater (2001) as one that integrates education from early childhood (where P represents preschool or prekindergarten) through a bachelor's degree (Grade 16). Goals of the P-16 system include improving college access and readiness, smoothing transitions from various levels of learning, strengthening relationships between schools and families, closing the racial achievement gap between minority students, and developing a wider range of opportunities and learning experiences for students in high school for the final 2 years (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002). The sixth annual State of American Education Address, New Challenges in 1999, A New Resolve: Moving

American Education Into the 21st Century, former Secretary of Education Richard Riley described “seamless education” as the wave of the future (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002, p.1).

Various researchers have called for the integration of high school and postsecondary educational institutions creating a P-16 theoretical framework and decreased duplication of the two systems (Brake, 2003; Johnstone & Del Genio, 2000; Orill, 2001; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). It is ironic that although dual credit opportunities are the fastest growing program in high schools, the need for remediation courses are the fastest growing program in institutions of higher education for academically deficient students (Clark, 2001; Brake, 2003).

College Access Pipeline

The “pipeline” to a university program has five sequential steps: aspire to complete at least a bachelor’s degree, becoming academically prepared to enroll in college, taking college entrance examinations; completing college admissions applications, and matriculating (Horn, 1997). Horn’s research indicated that although approximately 65% of all 1992 high school graduates planned to obtain a bachelor’s degree as 10th graders, but only 40% accomplished the next four steps leading to 4-year institution enrollment. First-generation college aspirants are more likely to not take some of the required courses, receive college planning information late, and experience cultural conflicts between their new college environment with their families, communities, and friends (Brake, 2003; MacDonough, 1997).

Van de Water and Rainwater (2001) recommended universal postsecondary education to improve college readiness by eliminating general and low tracks and providing

skills for all students to succeed in higher institutions of education (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002). Phipho (2001) proposed the need for parents to receive information that effectively communicates and clarifies the options and expectations of students as they move through the P16 educational system. He went a step farther to suggest that higher education institutions plan academic summer camps and mentoring programs that reduce the barriers between high school and college and promote increased success for more students (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002).

Many African American students and other minorities do not attend college and earn degrees because they do not have access to the personal support networks, informational resources, or other structured programs including regular checkpoints to properly plan for college requirements, the application, and enrollment. To increase the number of minority college attendees and graduates, students should have increased support from their schools, parents, and others to help them plan for postsecondary education and their future careers (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Schneider & Stevenson, 1999).

Small Schools and Learning Communities

The two primary factors that affected the support of smaller schools were *A Nation at Risk* (1983) demanding more rigorous academic standards and the 1999 Columbine tragedy bringing more attention for less hostile and socially nurturing school environments (Backstrom, 2004). Deborah Meier is recognized as an originator of the small schools movement, leading a nontraditional school environment in New York City, Central Park East. Students attending Meier's school were primarily disenfranchised, economically disadvantaged, and in their traditional schools, only thought as capable in vocational and

low-level track courses (Clinchy, 2000). Meier attributed the success of Central Park East to creating a community of caring adults who held high expectations for all students and who encouraged all students to rise above their perceived identity and academic efficacy (Meier, 1995).

Small schools create greater accountability for student success by allowing teachers to monitor their professional effectiveness more closely than in traditionally large schools (Backstrom, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1997). Student engagement is a primary element in the small schools movement, which includes enabling students to accept greater responsibility for their learning, shifting and expanding of teacher roles, and greater collaboration between faculty, staff, and administrators (Backstrom). Relationships and power negotiations influence the norms and culture of the school community, regarding learning, teaching, and relationships (Lee and Smith, 1995). The assumption that all students will be successful and continue their education beyond high school is a learning norm. Successful small schools often redefine student perceptions of their futures with more commitment to their own learning, ambition, academic self-confidence, and college aspirations.

Research conclusions validated that positive outcomes of smaller schools such as narrowing the racial and economic achievement gap decreased the dropout rate (Clinchy, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Friedkin & Necochea, 1988; Galetti, 1999; Howley, 1989, 1996; Klonsky, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1996; Raywid, 1998).

Small schools not only increase positive results for students, but also enable teacher performance and job commitment change (Backstrom, 2004; Rosenholtz, 1991). Darling-Hammond (1997) concluded that smaller schools allows more desirable professional

behaviors to occur such as greater collaboration between colleagues, deeper relationships bonds between all students and staff, and increased teacher leadership.

College Credit Options

A dual credit program is one that enables high school students to enroll in postsecondary institutions while still in high school, earning concurrent high school and college credit (Gemma, 2004). Dual enrollment programs allow students to receive both high school and college credit for a class taught on a high school campus by a qualified high school instructor. Both the high school and the cooperating college sponsor the program (Gemma, 2004). These courses provide a challenging curricular choice to offerings in the traditional high school (Brake, 2003; Chatman, & Smith, 1998; Crossland, 1999; Delicath, 1999; Hanson, 2001; Mercurio, Lambert, & Oesterle, 1983; Urahn, 1993; Windham, 1998).

Benefits for dual credit and postsecondary options for high school students include: accelerating student momentum towards the requirements of a postsecondary degree, families and students experience a reduction in tuition costs, greater collaboration between college and high school faculty, greater academic rigor for high school students, greater academic access for students attending rural, small schools, creating stronger relationships between communities and colleges, and increasing college aspirations for more students (Brake, 2003).

Dual credit programs have proven to have a positive effect for minority and at-risk college academic performance (Brake, 2003; Brigham, 1989; Broughton, 1987; Hugo, 2001; Lieberman, 1985; Opp, 2001). Credit-based transition programs serve public education by providing students with realistic skills and rigorous practice needed for college success, helping high school teachers prepare students, expose the college experience to students who

may perceive themselves without college ability, enabling college and high school faculty collaboration goals, broadening course options for students, increasing academic expectations of students, lowering overall tuition costs for students, and institutionalizing high school and college relationships (Bailey, Karyp, & Orr, 1998, 1999).

Data suggest that higher grades and greater retention in college are earned by students participating in dual enrollment options in high school compared to students who do not participate in dual enrollment programs (Hoffman, 2005). Although all student groups enjoy the benefits of postsecondary options in high school, they are unevenly distributed across minority and poor students. Equity has not been achieved due to the lack of information regarding options, lack of challenging curricular offerings in some high schools, and participation fees in some states.

Community College Impact

Carter's (2004) research regarding the contribution of local community colleges suggested that they are significant stakeholders in the school reform effort, embrace the role of "brokers" with other businesses, public agencies, and educational institutions, allowing for students who were not successful in the traditional high school experience redemption and move on through the educational pipeline. As Carter reported,

Of the higher education institutions, community colleges have been the most responsive to social, political, and economic forces and have sought out relationships with other institutions in their communities, including the local school districts, business firms, community based organization and social agencies. These relationships, in many cases benefited the parties involved, permitting the leverage of scarce resources, cost reduction and exchange of skills. (p. 117)

Carter's work predicts that community colleges will serve as a "community-wide educational clearinghouse" of the future.

Community colleges offer needed services that both high schools and 4-year higher education institutions do not perform to a large degree such as being more accessible to disadvantaged and minority groups, offering remedial education, providing various community services, and adapting vocational course offerings to community and industry demands (Bailey & Averianova, 1998). According to the National Assessment of Vocational Education (Muraskin, 1994), vocational education programs in high schools are criticized for lack of challenging academic content and poor quality, and often serves as a “dumping ground” for students with special needs or significant problems, publicly funded postsecondary vocational programs have been proven to produce successful training experiences for students (Brake, 2003).

Community colleges and high schools can collaborate to achieve greater postsecondary transitions for students by establishing middle college high schools, K-16 partnerships, technical preparation programs, dual credit programs, and distance learning programs. Successful collaboration efforts should be reflective of the political, social, and economic conditions unique to the local community and develop a common agenda to increase success of students at all levels (Schuetz, 2000).

School Reform and Support for Middle College High Schools in North Carolina

Introduction

In 2003, the Governor’s Office in North Carolina secured an \$11 million grant to redesign and create over 40 new high schools funded primarily by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as well as other private businesses, government institutions, and various foundations, named the “New Schools Project.” In 2004, The North Carolina General

Assembly launched another phase, called the “Learn and Earn” program to create more early college-high school partnerships with private and public colleges and universities, and community colleges. Districts participating in these new programs include Anson, Asheville City, Buncombe, Catawba, Chatham, Cumberland, Davidson, Durham, Edgecombe, Granville, Guilford, Iredell, Nash, New Hanover, Newton-Conover City, Robeson, Rutherford, Sampson, Scotland, Wake, and Winston-Salem/Forsythe School districts.

The Civil Rights Project report (2005) criticized North Carolina’s graduation improvement rate of 97% as misleading in 2003, due to its “soft” accountability if the school district makes minimal improvement, as low as 1/10th of 1% according to the expectations of the No Child Left Behind Law. Hoffman’s (2004) report noted that North Carolina’s Earn and Learn initiative sends students to smaller schools on college campuses and within 5 years, students can earn an associate’s degree, as well as a high school diploma.

North Carolina Governor, Mike Easley, believes that this 2.2 million dollar initiative will improve the state’s workforce and overall economy. Students have opportunities such as internships and academic preparation in high-demand fields such as health care, the sciences, and technology.

North Carolina’s new high school reform initiatives are supported by the North Carolina Education Cabinet and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The North Carolina New Schools Project (NSP) is a committee originating from the governor’s office, legislatively mandated, that includes a partnership of public-private schools and the highest executives of major education sectors. The NSP uses the experience and established research of successful examples of focused, academically rigorous, small high schools where educators are given the necessary flexibility to meet the needs of each individual student.

The goal of the New Schools Project is to fully implement redesigned high schools to eliminate the achievement gap, increase graduation rates, increase teacher retention, and provide quality professional development to the staff (The Vision – Serve, 2004).

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has established a 30-member team to provide support with the researched successful dimensions of re-designed, newly implemented small high schools. Higher education partners are also involved with the New Schools Project by engaging in the planning of a seamless transition for high school students into the college system. The North Carolina Community College system, the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, and the University of North Carolina system have each sponsored sessions to discuss collaboration and creation of new high schools, specifically early college high schools, and the potential policy barriers that need to be solved to fully implement (The Vision – Serve, 2004).

Middle College High Schools

The Middle College concept is an example of a collaborative, well-designed program between high schools and higher education institutions that demonstrate the commitment of all educational stakeholders' commitment to student achievement and success (Hodgkinson, 1991). Middle colleges are independent high schools located on the campus of community colleges or 4-year universities. Janet Lieberman, professor of psychology at LaGuardia Community College in New York, is recognized as the first leader of this concept in 1972 (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000). Traditionally, middle college high schools serve students identified by teachers and counselors as at-risk and potential dropouts. The instructional day is designed to help students experience more success in school with smaller

classes, intensive support and academic services, and to obtain more advanced training or higher education (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000).

Although we recognize the first Middle College High School leader as Janet Lieberman, the concept began earlier. In the 1950s, Stanford University Professor, William Proctor, believed in connecting a California junior college with the traditional high school in the arrangement of Grades 11–14. Although this program only lasted for a few years, some refer to Proctor’s school as the first “middle college” (Brake, 2003; Broughton, 1987). In 1970, the College Entrance Examination Board suggested this combination of the last 2 years of high school and first 2 years of college concept end with students receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree. Psychiatric and medical experts believed grouping 16–20 year olds developmentally was more appropriate than grouping 14–18 year olds in the traditional high school (Brake, 2003; College Examination Board, 1970).

The structural foundation for the original middle college high school concept included that student enrollment be limited to 450 and that the college campus environment encourage students to develop an altered identity with a future orientation and motivation that decreases self-destructive teenage behavior. The collaboration between the independent high schools and higher education institutions also reduces anxiety between college faculty and high school students as well as encourage greater collaboration between high school and college faculty (Lieberman, 2004). The altered college schedule also promotes more portfolio assessments, project learning, and longer classes. High school faculty gain more professional privileges such as private offices, personal telephones, better facilities, working on the college schedule, and the opportunity to teach at the college level (Lieberman, 2004).

Counseling is also a crucial element of the middle college high school concept with an average ratio of at least three counselors per school of 450 students. Internships and work in the community is also encouraged (Lieberman, 2004).

Middle College High School Students

Selection criteria for students to attend middle college high school vary in each district and individual school. Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000) suggested that recruitment procedures be systematic, developing a student profile with high schools, feeder middle schools, and college staff. All stakeholders including counselors, administrators, and teachers from feeder and middle college high schools should build strong relationships to recommend students who would benefit from the nontraditional setting (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000).

Many educators select students who are capable of higher level college work, with above average intelligence, but underachieves in their traditional high school for a number of reasons (McGanney, Mei, & Rosenblum, 1989). Most students who attend a middle college high school experienced difficulty finding success academically and or socially in the traditional, comprehensive high school (Schussler, 2002).

MCHS Learning Environments

Research related to middle college high schools reflect that at-risk students perform at higher levels than students at alternative schools, graduated at higher levels than other at-risk students in their school district, and earned higher scores on assessments (Bailey & Karp, 2003). Previous studies suggest that individualized instruction for both high school and college credit courses created within smaller learning environments serve students more effectively than traditional high schools (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000; Erardi, 2004).

Many teachers believe that one of the greatest benefits for students enrolled in middle college high schools was to help students discover and realistically prepare for their futures and help them develop higher aspirations and expectations of themselves (Cunningham & Wagonlander).

The foundational principles of the middle and early college high schools are based on developmental psychology infused with practical educational reform (Lieberman, 2004). The basic rationales are intellectual maturation is a continuous process—there is little or no difference between a student at the conclusion of the 12th grade and the beginning of college enrollment. Therefore learning should be a continuous process; the transitions should be smooth, and the curriculum between high school and college should be coordinated. Challenging both academic and personal needs, is a strong motivator for achievement. Positive role models improve behavior and flexible use of time advances opportunities for mastery. Teachers involved in reform have increased motivation for success and caring teachers improve student's success (Lieberman, 2004).

MCHS Academic Achievement

Over the past 30 years, middle college collaborations have produced positive results such as higher graduation rates, improved grades point average, improved daily attendance, increased job placements, and increased number of students moving into postsecondary education (National Middle College High School Consortium, 1999). The original LaGuardia Middle College High School has received various awards on the state and national level, including the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Commission on Excellence in Education, and the Council for the Advancement of Teaching (Carter, 2004).

Bailey and Karp (2002) found that middle college high school students achieved at higher levels on math and reading tests than county and district averages. Middle college high school achievement levels have proven to reduce the drop-out rate, increase graduation and college attendance, and improve student performance and self-esteem (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000; Heard, 1988; Houston, Byers & Danner, 1992; Lieberman, 1986).

Instructional strategies that engaged students in a seamless curriculum so that high school students could make real connections between graduation, postsecondary education, and work were incorporated (Conley, 2001; Cullen, 1991; Fine, 1986; Michael, 2003; Williams, 2000). Student motivation for learning increased, a greater responsibility for their own learning occurred, and the total amount of time needed to graduate from college was reduced (Lieberman, 1986, 1998; Middle College Consortium, 2002).

Numerous results confirm that the middle college high school model has proven successful for students who may have dropped out of high school without this alternative (Lieberman, 1998; Michael, 2003; Millonzi & Kolker, 1976). In the school year 1999-2000, 41% of 4,581 middle college high school students enrolled in 3,984 college classes, achieving 97% passing rates, higher than freshman cohorts attending regular college classes without the support (Lieberman, 2004). Based on Lieberman's 10-year data from the originators of the Middle College High School concept in New York from 1990–2004, 97% of MCHS students remained in school, compared to 70% in the city overall, 87% graduated, and 90% made the transition to college (Lieberman, 2004).

Support for Sustaining Middle College High Schools

Research has shown (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000) that sustaining middle college high schools is dependent upon visionary leadership, administrative support,

communication, shared governance, and successful collaboration. Ongoing growth and maintenance occurs most when all educators identify themselves as leaders and model instructional best practices to produce positive results. Funding for staff development is critical to excellent instruction and collaboration efforts between institutions of higher education and other school sites (Cunningham & Wagonlander).

Although the 1972 middle college goal was for all students to obtain an associate's degree upon graduation, the plan was not actualized until outside philanthropic support grew from the Ford Foundation, Gates Foundation, Excel Early College program, and the Carnegie Corporation. The financial support from the nonprofit organizations helped to fulfill the original goals of the middle college high school concept (Carter, 2004). One of the most significant challenges for school districts and colleges to fully institutionalize the middle college high school concept is that public education institutions have to sustain funding as private funding ends (Carter).

The Early College High School Initiative includes 12 organizations dedicated to developing and supporting more early college high schools nationally. The organizations include Jobs for the Future, Antioch University Seattle, City University of New York, Foundation for California Community Colleges, Georgia Department of Education, Knowledge Works Foundation, Middle College National Consortium, National Council of La Raza, Gateway to College, SECME, Utah Partnership for Education and Workforce Development, and Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. State reform efforts in Texas (15 schools) and 10 North Carolina schools are affiliated with the Early College High School Initiative (Cunningham, 2000).

Cunningham's report also summarized the present and near future plans and characteristics of the early college high school efforts:

1. 170 schools anticipated by 2008,
2. 46 schools open as of September 2004,
3. 68,000 students anticipated by 2012,
4. 8,030 students enrolled as of 2004,
5. 19 states with Early College High Schools as of September 2004,
6. 25 states projected to have Early College High School by 2005.

Additionally, the number of states with Statewide Early College High School Initiatives include

1. 63% that are public schools,
2. 30% that are charter schools,
3. 4% that are contract schools,
4. 2% that are magnet schools,
5. 54% that are on a postsecondary campus,
6. 33% that are off campus,
7. 9% that are within a comprehensive high school,
8. 4% that are on a Native American Reservation,
9. 59% that are postsecondary partners—2-year institutions,
10. 28% that are postsecondary partners—4-year institutions,
11. 13% postsecondary partners – 2- and 4-year institutions.

Blended Theoretical Framework

Introduction

A blended theoretical framework of resiliency and self-efficacy theory was created to better understand how the unique school environment of GTCC MCHS provided students the necessary “protective” factors to educationally succeed while overcoming adversity as well as how the environment provided students with opportunities to increase their personal self-efficacy to take ownership and “approach” future educational opportunities.

In Resilient Classrooms: Creating Healthy Environment for Learning (Doll, Zucker, & Brehm, 2004), the authors’ notions align with Alfred Bandura (1986), the father of self-efficacy research, that “academic efficacy emerges out of the opportunities to tackle challenging learning tasks with the instructional supports that make success likely” (p.10). Frank Pajares (2002), a leader in the self-efficacy research field, suggests that more qualitative studies are needed to explore student perceptions on how self-efficacy beliefs influence their academic paths, academic attainment, and how self-efficacy beliefs influence their effort, choices, perseverance, persistence, and resiliency. Pajares also called for more research to explore the role of schools as social systems for cultivating student efficacy beliefs, and engage in greater “intertheoretical crosstalk” to develop more complete understandings of motivational constructs (2002).

Component–Resilience

This section will provide an overview of the literature regarding resiliency theory, educational resilience, the impact of resiliency on minority students, and resiliency building interventions included in the conceptual framework of this study. This study will include student interview questions and data analysis addressing two intervention strategies from

Henderson and Milstein (2003) including providing care and support and setting and communicating high expectations.

Resiliency theory. Resiliency is a construct that describes children, although exposed to high levels of adversity, possess a certain quality to avoid the negative pitfalls that most people experiencing the same negative environmental factors manage to “bounce back” and succeed anyway (Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Lunquanti, 1992). The resiliency process, contingent upon significant adversity, comes from the functional systems of human adaptation relating to threats that compromise protective systems (Luthar, Chicchett, & Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001). The resiliency process must include exposure to threat or adversity and success of positive adaptation despite developmental process attacks (Luther & Zigler, 1991). Resiliency theory is comprised of the identified protective intervention factors that are absent in the child’s school, family, or community (Benard 1991; Speck & Krovetz 1995; Werner & Smith, 1992).

The resiliency wheel developed by Henderson and Milstein (2003) contains a six-step intervention strategy to develop resiliency contained in six quadrants. The wheel includes two sides representing strategies to “build resiliency in the environment” and strategies to “mitigate risk factors in the environment.” The three quadrants on the left side of the wheel regarding building resiliency includes: providing caring and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation. The three quadrants on the right side of the wheel regarding mitigating risk factors include: teaching life skills, setting clear and consistent boundaries, and increasing pro-social bonding (See Figure 1).

Benard's (1991, 1993) research indicates the four attributes common among resilient children as social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and sense of purpose and future. Social competence is achieved by developing positive adult and peer relationships. Problem-solving skills are the ability to plan by using resources and seeking help from others. Autonomy is described as the ability to establish some environmental control and act independently due to a strong sense of personal identity. Developing and planning toward established personal goals, future aspirations, and hope are descriptions of the sense of purpose that resilient children possess. A person's ability to "bounce back" with varying degrees of the four resilient attributes depends on the protective factors in that person's school, community, and family life. Wolin and Wolin's (1993) research indicates seven internal resiliency characteristics possessed by children and adults. The resiliency traits that vary in development by age include independence, initiative, relationship, insight, creativity, humor, and morality. This research also concludes that children moving from feelings of fear to feelings of empowerment and pride of competence are the key element for survival and success in life when experiencing high levels of adversity. Despite past failure in school and life adversities, resilient children continue to engage in school each day, cultivate relationships with significant adults, and develop talent and skills.

Psychologists specializing in resilience conclude that given the appropriate, protective environment, at-risk students have the capacity for emotional resilience, which can lead to a more purposeful and functional life (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). It is important for educational systems to acknowledge that resilience can be learned and is a process involving interactions over time, not just the development of certain skills (Egeland, 1993; Pianta & Walsh, 1998; Rak & Patterson, 1996; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1995).

Educational resilience. The likelihood of school success despite adversities and personal vulnerabilities within experiences and environmental conditions is the accepted definition of educational resilience (Wang & Gordon, 1994). Researchers in this area promote and identify personal and environmental strategies that protect at-risk students from adverse conditions with the goal of producing students who are academically successful (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; McMillan & Reed, 1993). Henderson and Milstein (2003) suggested that analyzing the resiliency building process may be more valuable to schools than examining student weaknesses. It is important to acknowledge that students do not achieve educational resilience through a specific life event or innate personal characteristics, but as a result of ongoing positive interactions with their environment and individuals (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997).

Educational resilience studies have expanded beyond the general concepts of resilience, identifying adverse conditions such as drug addiction, minority status, and poverty and the children that are successful despite these adverse conditions (Wang et al., 1994). Ongoing interactions and support with positive and caring adults has proven to be one of the most important protective factor to increase educational resilience, often times provided by educators and relatives outside the immediate family, sometimes without the existence in the student's home or community environment (Floyd, 1996; McMillan & Reed, 1993). The informal network of educational support and high expectations from family, friends, and other caring adults positively affect academic success in school (Alva & Padilla, 1995; Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Clark, 1983; Finn & Rock, 1997; Geary, 1988; Gonzalez & Padilla 1997; Horn & Chen, 1998; Wang et al.).

Researchers describe “responsiveness” as a school’s agency and awareness of meeting the needs of students (Lateral, 1998; Renihan & Renihan, 1995). One of the primary methods of schools portraying responsiveness with at-risk children was by meeting the noneducational needs as well as academic needs (Schussler, 2002). In addition to suggested strategies to promote educational resilience, the 1970s and 1980s effective schools model (Edmonds, 1979) can offer many positive characteristics that schools can institutionalize to positively affect academic success and resiliency for disadvantaged, low-achieving, and minority students (Lee, Winfield, & Wilson, 1991; Masten, 1994; Wang et al., 1997).

Krovetz’ (1999) research concludes that schools can positively impact educational resilience based on foundational belief systems regarding the daily educational experience for students, not based on a small grant or an added program. The following are recommended school strategies to better foster resiliency: Students can work in small groups and independently; classes are grouped heterogeneously with appropriate, flexible regrouping options; common, schoolwide instructional practices; a planned and strategic “safety net” for failing students to achieve success; and consistent expectations for students to use higher order thinking skills when asking and answering questions.

Resiliency and minority students. Identity development is a significant process in adolescence for all young people; however, this can be more complex for ethnic and racial minority students, depending on their environment (Miller, 1999; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Research findings involving 297 African American young people concluded that in order to rise above negative stereotypes and social stigmas, African American student must develop a healthy racial identity to avoid problem behaviors and stress (McCreary, Slavin, & Berry, 1996).

Research has suggested that increased academic self-efficacy and internal locus of control is more likely to occur in school environments that promote resiliency strategies, especially for African Americans, more than White and Latino students (Borman & Rachuba, 2001). The concept of racial socialization and racial identity development in a hostile societal environment impacts African American students' navigation through experiences, which affect perceived life options and chance of succeeding (Boykin & Toms, 1985; McCreary et al., 1996; Stevenson, 1994).

Burt and Halpin's work concludes that the African American experience in the United States contains a variety of contradictions to the majority culture including struggle and triumph, humility and pride, exclusion and inclusion, and denial and recognition. As a group, African Americans have demonstrated significant collective resilience. Optimism and a positive self-concept have been shown to be crucial factors to avoid internalizing negative messages and increasing educational resilience (Catteral, 1998; Taylor, 1994; Turner, Laria, Shapiro, & Perez, 1993; Waxman, Huang, & Padron, 1997).

Henderson and Milstein's Resiliency Wheel

The resiliency wheel developed by Henderson and Milstein (2003) contains a six-step intervention strategy to develop resiliency contained in six quadrants. This study will include student interview questions and data analysis addressing two intervention strategies from Henderson and Milstein (2003) including: providing care and support and setting and communicating high expectations.

The wheel includes two sides representing strategies to "build resiliency in the environment" and strategies to "mitigate risk factors in the environment." The three quadrants on the left side of the wheel regarding building resiliency includes: providing care

and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation. The three quadrants on the right side of the wheel regarding mitigating risk factors include: teaching life skills, setting clear and consistent boundaries, and increasing pro-social bonding (see Figure 1).

Building resiliency in the environment. One of the fascinating aspects of resiliency is that intervention can originate from a variety of sources. Parents, as well as teachers, coaches, or other significant adults with close relationships, can provide the intervention necessary to build resiliency within young people. Henderson and Milstein (2003) believed the most important quadrant, providing care and support is critical to the resiliency developmental process. The absence of this decreases the chances that a young person will overcome adversity. Bernard (1991) concluded that the element of setting consistent and high-level expectations should be aligned with numerous opportunities to engage in the social environment of the child such as intellectually challenging school experiences and consistent expectations of high performance. Providing opportunities for meaningful participation is represented often by student encouragement to participate in athletics and clubs to increase positive self-esteem and critical thinking skills (Garibaldi, 1992; Rak & Patterson, 1996).

Mitigating risk factors in the environment. Three strategies are suggested to decrease the quantity of risk factors that threaten resiliency. Teaching life skills include communication skills, decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, and conflict resolution skills to better cope and enable more positive interactions in one's personal daily environment. The development of these skills is critical to the ability of students to maximize their learning potential in the school environment. Setting clear and consistent

boundaries can be fostered through schools by communicating clear and fair rules, with consistent consequences when broken. Increasing pro-social bonding with caring adults serving as role models is a significant strategy to decrease the probability of children engaging in damaging high-risk behaviors. Research has indicated that outside of the family, teachers are often the most significant positive role model in a child's life and inspire them to engage in the learning process more eagerly than in the absence of a caring adult (Christle, Harley, Nelson, & Jones, 1991).

Resiliency aspects of the blended theoretical framework. For this study, the researcher chose two components from the Henderson and Milstein wheel for building resiliency in the environment to include in the blended theoretical framework: (a) providing care and support and (b2) setting and communicating high expectations. The first component was chosen for this study because caring and personalization are themes that appear consistently in the effective schools literature (Fiske, 1991). The second component was chosen because of its relationship to the academic rigor and expectations of the middle college high school location on a college campus.

Component 2—Self-Efficacy

This section will provide an overview of the literature regarding self-efficacy theory including its origin in motivation and social cognitive theory, its impact on decision making, and sources of self-efficacy building interventions. This study will include student interviews and data analysis addressing two self-efficacy building intervention strategies from Bandura (1986) and Pajares (1996) including: performance accomplishments and vicarious experiences.

Self-efficacy theory. Alfred Bandura's self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986; Bandura & Walters, 1963) is a subset of motivation and social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory differentiates learning from performance of actions previously learned. In other words, by observing models, people acquire strategies and skills that are not shown at the time of learning, but are demonstrated at a later time when they believe it is appropriate and when motivated to do so. Social cognitive theory assumes that processes of motivation influence both learning and performance (Schunk, 1989), rather than motivation as a performance variable only.

Self-efficacy theory began in 1977 with Alfred Bandura's article, "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory." According to Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; Bandura & Walters, 1963), the self-reflection process evaluates experiences and thought processes; therefore, how a person thinks about themselves mediates between their knowledge and future action. "Knowledge, skill, and prior attainments are often poor predictors of subsequent attainments because the beliefs that individuals hold about their abilities and about the outcome of their efforts powerfully influence the ways in which they will behave" (Pajares, 1995, p.). Bandura (1986) accepted self-reflection as the most unique individual capability, including the perception of self-efficacy, "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 2)

It is important to differentiate between self-efficacy and self-concept. Self-concept includes how an individual sees her/himself, how an individual would like to see her/himself, and how an individual presents her/himself to others (Rosenberg, 1979). Self-

concept includes *general* attitudes about her/himself and her/his general outlook on life. Self-efficacy is domain and task *specific*.

Self-efficacy and decision making. Bandura's (1986) notion of self-efficacy assumes that people will seek out tasks they feel confident and competent and avoid tasks they do not feel confident and competent. Pajares (1996) wrote "efficacy beliefs help determine how much effort people will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles, and how resilient they will prove in the face of adverse situations—the higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence, and resilience" (p.)

Self-efficacy beliefs are strong determinants and predictors of final accomplishment levels of individuals; therefore, beliefs of personal efficacy are a major factor in human agency. Both accurate and false perceptions of self-efficacy influence behavioral choices (Bandura, 1986). Bandura believed the most functional efficacy judgments and decisions are those that lead people to engage in realistically challenging tasks that slightly exceed what one is capable of doing at a given time that also further develop their skills and capabilities.

Sources of self-efficacy. The events that influence self-efficacy judgments are sensitive to the contextual factors of thought processes, what is being managed, affective states and actions, changing environmental conditions, and regulation of one's own motivation (Pajares, 1996). Self-efficacy expectations are learned and modified by experiences and processing of information including: performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasions, and emotional arousal. Bandura (1977) believes designing interventions to increase self-efficacy expectations by attending to the sources of efficacy information should increase approach versus avoidant behavior.

The most powerful sources of self-efficacy expectations are believed to be performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1977, 1982). These accomplishments are associated with personal mastery experiences that lead to an increase in self-efficacy expectations, which often lead to seeking out and greater task successes (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). This also concludes a failure experience at a specific task can lead to a decrease in self-efficacy expectations and avoidance of these tasks in the future (Campbell & Hackett, 1986).

Vicarious experiences involving observations of other people's performance behaviors. Bandura (1986) believed these vicarious experiences are the most influential when an individual observes others believed to be a role model or with characteristics similar to herself, especially when the observing individual is uncertain about their own abilities versus individuals who are more certain about their skills and capabilities.

Verbal persuasion includes encouragement and discouragement by other individuals and societal influences such as cultural and societal norms. As Bandura (1986) reported, "People who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given tasks are likely to mobilize greater sustained effort than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when difficulties arise" (p. 400). Hackett and Betz (1981) found that although modest amounts of verbal discouragement can sometimes act as a motivator, continued verbal discouragement could affect self-perception and behavior ranging from failing to increase self-efficacy and successfully decreasing self-efficacy.

Emotional arousal is associated with the psychological state of an individual. Emotional arousal in the form of various anxieties including uneasiness, worry, and tension

has been found to have a negative relationship with high self-efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1977).

This study will include student interviews and data analysis addressing two self-efficacy building intervention strategies from Bandura (1986) and Pajares (1996) including: performance accomplishments and vicarious experiences.

Intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. The research regarding academic achievement and student motivation often explores the concepts of extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation. Pintrich and Schunk's (2002) textbook, *Motivation in Education*, defines intrinsic motivation as motivation to engage in an activity for its own sake and extrinsic motivation as motivation to engage in an activity as a means to an end. The authors caution against viewing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as two ends of a continuum, accepting the notion that a high rating on one end automatically means that one is low on the other. They believe that it is more appropriate to view intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as two separate continuums, each ranging from low to high, often being influenced by time across the lifespan and the context.

Students can learn for extrinsic or intrinsic reasons. However, evidence across grade levels suggest that intrinsic motivation positively relates to achievement, learning, perception of competence, and reduces anxiety (Boggiano, Main, & Katz, 1988; Gottfried, 1985, 1990). Students who are intrinsically motivated to learn participate in activities that enhance learning, attend to instruction, and apply knowledge and skills in different contexts. Intrinsic motivation can also be affected by a learner's curiosity being piqued by learning activities that are different from their existing ideas, and students feeling a sense of control

over their participation in tasks related to their own learning. As students develop new skills, and recognize their progress, they feel more efficacious about learning. Therefore, increased educational self-efficacy and positive outcome expectations heighten intrinsic motivation and lead to more learning (Bandura, 1986, 1993).

Several research studies made the connection between the relationship between intrinsic motivation and learning. Intrinsic motivation positively relates to internal control and perceived competence (Harter, 1981, Harter & Connell, 1984). Students who believe they are competent, display greater intrinsic motivation than students who perceive their competence as lower (Gottfried, 1985, 1990). With respect to rigor, Harter's (1978, 1981) studies concluded that children judged their own competence higher and enjoyed greater pleasure from learning when they succeeded in more difficult tasks.

Bandura (1986) asserted that appropriate models and reinforcements affected students' attempts and internalization of self-rewards and mastery goals. He also asserted that motivation is negatively affected when students do not associate with peers that are mastery oriented or families do not reward their attempts. The theoretical concepts and research regarding the relationship between intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and resilience makes a plausible connection with research shared earlier in the literature review concerning racial identity development and the educational environment (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Borman and Rachuba's (2001) work concluded that it is especially important for African American students, more than White and Latino students, that the educational environment promotes resiliency strategies in an effort to increase academic self-efficacy and internal locus of control. The concept of racial socialization and racial identity development in a hostile societal environment impact African American students'

navigation through experiences, which affect perceived life options and chance of succeeding (Boykin & Toms, 1985; McCreary et al., 1996; Stevenson, 1994).

Self-efficacy aspects of the blended theoretical framework. For this study, the researcher chose two sources of building self-efficacy for the blended theoretical framework: (a) performance accomplishments and (b) vicarious experiences. The first source was chosen for this study because Bandura (1977, 1982) believed performance accomplishments to be the most powerful source of self-efficacy expectations. These accomplishments are associated with personal mastery experiences, which often lead to seeking out greater task successes (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Students who believe they are competent display greater intrinsic motivation than students who perceive their competence as lower (Gottfried, 1985, 1990). With respect to rigor, Harter's (1978, 1981) studies concluded that children judged their own competence higher and enjoyed greater pleasure from learning when they succeeded in more difficult tasks.

The second self-efficacy source for this study, vicarious experiences involving the observation of other people's performance behaviors, was chosen because Bandura (1986) believed that these experiences to be the most influential when the individual observes others believed to have characteristics similar to her/himself, especially when the observing individual is uncertain about her/his own abilities. Most of the participants in this study were not doing well academically at their former traditional secondary school and did not perceive themselves as successful high school students, much less potentially successful college students. The "power of the site" is a critical aspect of the middle college high school philosophy.

Summary

The review of literature in this chapter identified the components that affect the success of African American students acquiring a high school diploma and postsecondary educational success. The philosophical foundation and organization of the traditional high school allow for schools and educators to accept and *expect* a percentage of students to fail. The moral and ethical responsibility of public schools to educate all children, especially minority students, at high levels becomes even more urgent as the racial demographics of the country and state of North Carolina evolve.

The North Carolina Education Cabinet has set a goal of eliminating the minority achievement gap by the year 2010 as part of the first America Initiative. Millions of dollars of grant money, as well as state and local school district funds in North Carolina are being allocated to design, develop, and implement more effective learning environments for high school students through initiatives such as Learn & Earn, the New Schools Project, and the Early College High School Initiative. It is important to conduct research in areas such as Middle College High Schools to gain insight to the educational affect on students, particularly African Americans.

The academic achievement gap between children of color and White students may be the most critical problems to solve in public education (Slavin & Madden, 2001). Many African American students and other minorities do not attend college and earn degrees because they do not have access to the personal support networks, informational resources, or other structured programs to plan for college requirements, application, and enrollment properly. To increase the number of minority college attendees and graduates, students should have increased support from their schools, parents, and others to help them plan for

postsecondary education and future careers (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Schneider & Stevenson, 1999).

The blended theoretical framework of resiliency and self-efficacy theory allows the audience of educators to better understand the intervention building strategies that can be nurtured in school settings: providing care and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and enabling students to engage in performance accomplishments and vicarious experiences to achieve greater resiliency, educational self-efficacy, and success in school. The voices of traditionally underserved students are needed to develop common themes and generalizations, for educational leaders and policymakers to attend to the areas that are helping students succeed in school and remove institutional barriers that hinder their journey toward a high school diploma and postsecondary education and career goals.

The next chapter, chapter 3—methodology, will examine the research methods and design of this study.

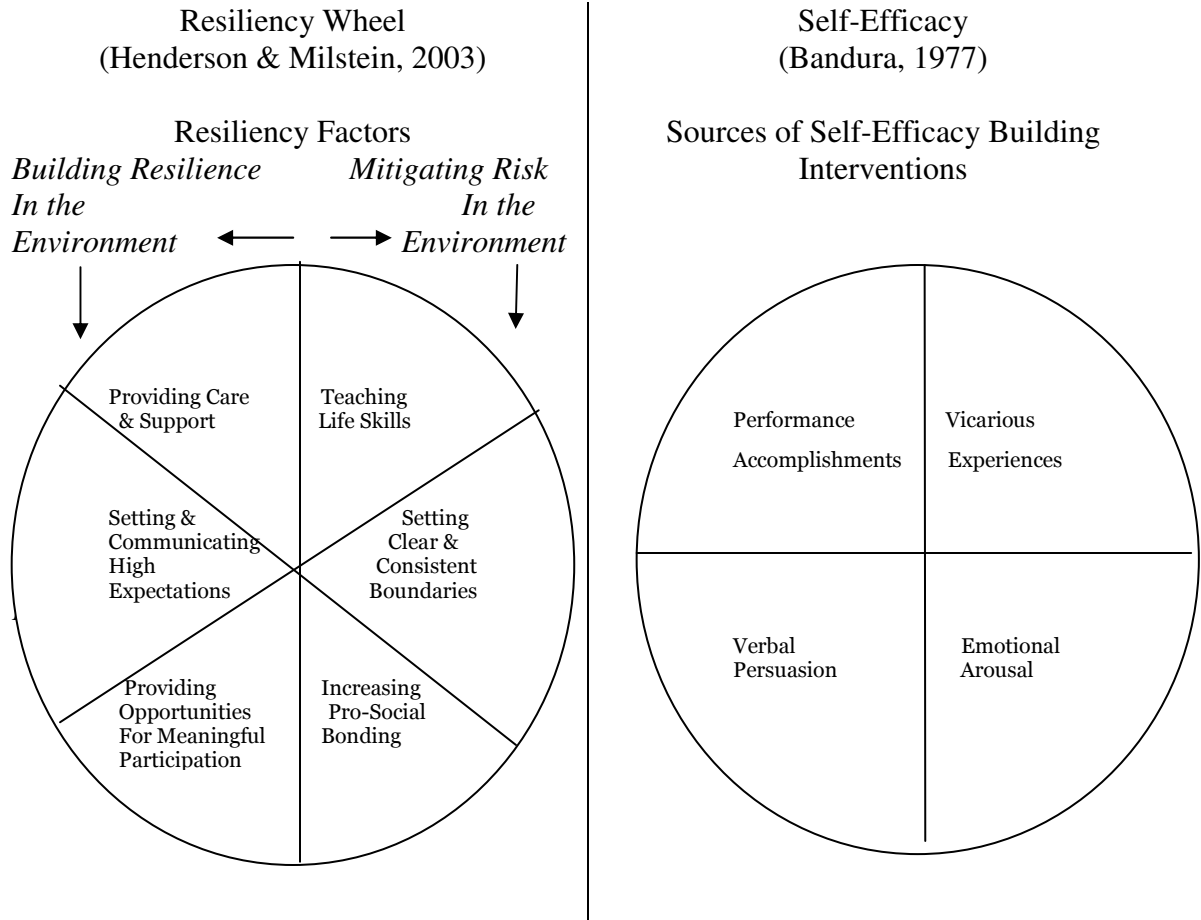


Figure 1: Resiliency Wheel

BLENDED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

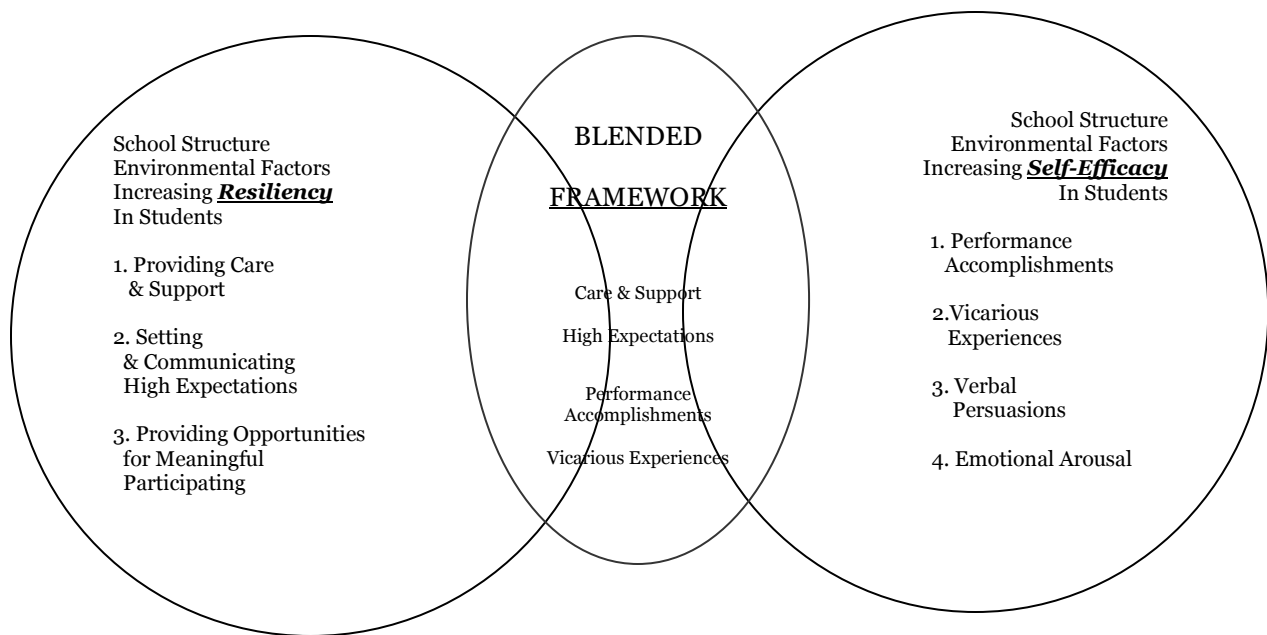


Figure 2. Blended theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter addresses the methods and research design used in this study in five sections. The first section provides an overview of the purpose of the study. The second section describes the research design and strategies. The third section provides the context of the study including a description of the site and participants. The fourth section includes methods for data collection, formulation and rationale of the interview protocol, data interpretation and analysis, and the blended theoretical framework. The last section provides a summary of this chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The primary research question in this study was “How do students perceive the North Carolina Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High School (GTCC MCHS) structure impacted their academic achievement and internal motivations for educational success?” This study explored the impact of the GTCC MCHS structure based on the student perceptions gathered through interviews and a document review of participants’ school records.

The following are supporting research questions:

1. What evidence is provided through student interviews to support the existence of resiliency building efforts within the GTCC MCHS structure, specifically: (a) providing care and support and (b) setting and communicating high expectations

2. What evidence is provided through student interviews to support the existence of self-efficacy building efforts within the GTCC MCHS structure, specifically:

(a) performance accomplishments and (b) vicarious experiences

Research Design and Approach

Research Design

This study was designed as a qualitative case study. American sociology and cultural anthropology spawned the qualitative research paradigm and has been increasingly embraced by educational researchers (Borg & Gall, 1989). Qualitative research is defined by Creswell (1998) as exploratory, with a constructivist perspective or participatory/advocacy perspective. The constructivist perspective allows for multiple meanings of individual experiences with the intent of developing a pattern.

The intent of qualitative research is through investigation, to gain greater understanding of an interaction, event, group, role, or social situation to progressively make sense of social phenomenon by comparing and classifying the study objects (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Creswell (1998) also wrote that qualitative research approaches allow the researcher to use more researcher-designed frameworks. Fundamentally, qualitative research is interpretive, requiring the researcher to describe the participants or setting, and then develop themes and conclusions based on meanings filtered through a theoretical lens, then offering more questions that need to be asked (Wolcott, 1994).

Negotiated outcomes describe the process between researcher and participant, while the researcher attempts to reconstruct the realities communicated by the human data sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). In qualitative methods, researchers

are interested in how participants make sense of their experiences and lives (Merriam, 1998). Merriam also believes the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, a human instrument rather than questionnaires or inventories. Later this chapter, this study will describe the use of a blended theoretical framework, created by the author, incorporating components of resiliency and self-efficacy theory.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) defined case studies as “focusing on society and culture, whether a group, a program or an organization” (p. 61). Creswell (1998) defined a case study as “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system” (p.). Creswell further clarifies “bounded” for the purpose of conducting research, as a specific case separated in terms of place, time, place or other physical boundaries. An instrumental case study is one which focuses on a specific issue (Creswell). This research was designed as an instrumental case study seeking to discover the perceptions of African American seniors enrolled at GTCC MCHS related to their academic achievement and educational motivation grounded in a blended theoretical framework of resiliency and self-efficacy theory. The choice to conduct the study as a case study was influenced by the researcher’s focus on student self-reflection and perceptions of school structure and the researcher’s doubt that quantitative data could give an accurate depiction of student experiences.

The researcher chose a case study design for two primary reasons: First, the researcher did not believe that quantitative data alone could accurately capture the essence of the GTCC MCHS student experiences. Although student records gave information regarding grades before and after GTCC MCHS enrollment, attendance, and college courses taken, this method alone could not holistically measure student feelings

and thoughts regarding personal self-reflection on their academic achievement and motivation for educational success. Second, the focus of resiliency and self-efficacy building efforts provided within the school structure could not be adequately assessed quantitatively due to the importance of *student perceptions* of the school structure's impact on their academic achievement and motivation for educational success.

The emphasis of student perceptions was inspired by the following Cook-Sather (2002) quote:

Since the advent of formal education in the United States, both the educational system and that system's every reform have been premised on adults' notions of how education should be conceptualized and practiced. There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at some point those it ostensibly designed to serve. Authorizing student perspectives introduces into critical conversations the missing perspectives of those who experience daily the effects of existing educational policies-in-practice. (p. 3)

This study was designed to hear the student perspectives of a high school reform initiative as well as explore an important indicator of successful high school reform efforts, improved African American student achievement and postsecondary preparation and transition. Lincoln (1993) believed that empowering the voices of silenced students enabled them to become "collaborators in their own histories" (p. 41).

Research Strategy

The strategy of research for this qualitative case study was phenomenology, the exploration of a lived experience. This type of study describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals (Creswell, 1998; Tesch, 1987). The researcher explored the phenomenon not as it is theorized, but as it is lived and attempts to explain the aspects of the experience from the perceptions of those that are closest to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Meaning is constructed between the researcher and the individual and

awareness of the lived experience is enhanced (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Phenomenology is an appropriate methodological match for this study because it acknowledges the subjective interpretations of individual lived experiences.

The 2005 study of Middle College High Schools in California used a reflective phenomenology research method to gather, analyze, and establish themes from student open-ended interview questions and quantitative data including the California Assessment Test and the California High School Exit Exam (Smoot, 2005). The California research study addressed perspectives of students in the middle college high school program regarding their perceptions of the MCHS program and the factors of MCHS they believed contributed to their success in school. The patterns that emerged regarding their general MCHS perceptions were: their previous high school experiences were negative, participation was voluntary to enroll in the MCHS, and the MCHS provided high expectations regarding academic achievement and discipline. The patterns that emerged regarding factors of MCHS that students believed contributed to their success in school from the study were (a) students believed that they were already academically successful; (b) students had someone in their lives who encouraged them to academically achieve; (c) students had their own internal motivation; (d) and students had clear goals for college paths and career choices.

The forming of interview questions were borrowed from the principles of “responsive interviewing” as described in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The following paragraphs in this section include a brief overview of the foundational concepts used in this study from the responsive interviewing style of qualitative research (Rubin & Rubin). The fourth section of this

chapter, data collection and analysis, will provide more in depth explanations of how interview questions were formulated and analyzed.

Responsive interviewing is described as an interactive and dynamic process in qualitative research versus a mechanically applied “tool set.” The authors explained the purpose of interviews as part of case studies is to discover what happened, why it occurred, and its broad meanings. The interview is described as a “structured conversation” and is organized by main, follow-up, and probing questions. Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe the interviewee as “conversational partners.” This partner is allowed to take a more active role in guiding what paths and shaping the discussion the research should take. In addition, the uniqueness of the interviewee, the unique interaction with the researcher, and his or her distinct knowledge is also emphasized.

In this model, various factors influence the questioning style used, such as the personality of the researcher and the relationship with the conversational partner and researcher. Although researchers begin an interview project with a primary topic in mind, this technique allow questions to be modified during the interview to align with the interest and knowledge of the conversational partners. An interview protocol or “conversational guide” is suggested with this strategy to balance the desire for predictability of the responses with the flexibility to examine unanticipated topics (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Rubin and Rubin reported that “the guide is described as a free hand map to the conversation, pointing out the general direction but not specifying which nook and crannies will be explored (p. 150)” The intent of interview questions in the responsive model is to evoke detail, depth, nuances, vivid descriptions, rich with thematic material.

Context of the Study

Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High School (GTCC MCHS) is located in the Guilford County School district in North Carolina. The researcher received approval from the district's Research Review Committee to conduct this study at one of their middle college high schools and the principal at GTCC MCHS approved for this study to be conducted at his school site. The setting of the study provides aspects that align well with resiliency and self-efficacy theory in relation to the middle college high school programs. Due to the size of the Guilford County School district, the large minority population, the district being the first to create a middle college high school in the state, the total number of middle colleges exceeding any other district in the state, the achievement gap between African American and White students relating to the dropout rate, number of students enrolled in advanced placement courses, and SAT participation and scores, I researched the site to investigate the perceptions, motivations, and achievement of African American students attending a Middle College High School.

Guilford County School District

The following district information was retrieved from the Guilford County Schools (GCS) website on November 2, 2005. The district's mission statement is: "students will graduate as responsible citizens prepared to succeed in higher education or the career of their choice." Guilford County has 67,099 students, 7,927 full-time employees, and 108 schools including 22 high schools. Twelve schools are nontraditional high school options, including one early college, six middle colleges, two international

baccalaureate schools, one science, math, and technology academy, and one academy for the visual and performing arts. The student composition in the district includes 54% minority and 46% nonminority students, with a total of 40% African American students.

The percentage of Guilford County student dropouts in Grades 9-12 is 3.75% compared with 5.25% dropout rate in the entire state. The number of Guilford County high school students dropping out of school was 719 including 382 African Americans (53%). The number of Guilford County high school students taking the SAT is 2,689 students with an average score of 996, including 654 African Americans (24%) with an average score of 837. The number of Guilford County high school students enrolled in an advanced placement course is 3,126 including 621 African Americans (20%).

The Guilford County Schools homepage offers information regarding their middle college high school program—“The History and Purpose of the Middle College Movement” and “GCS Stars—Middle College Graduates.” The website documents describe their middle college high school programs as an opportunity for nontraditional students to engage in learning, complete high school, and focus on the future. They share that many students entering the middle college high school have dropped out or are at risk for dropping out. The graduates' page announces that more than 140 students thus far have earned diplomas from a Guilford County School District middle college high school, and within two MCHS campuses in 1 school year, 786 college credits were earned by students.

Each high school option has unique entrance criteria and the site specific application must be completed and turned into the principal during the late winter/early spring application window. Middle college student applicants must meet the identified

age, grade, and gender criteria of each school program and participate in the interview process.

GTCC MCHS Site

The Middle College at Guilford Technical Community College was the first Middle College High School in the state of North Carolina opening during the 2001–2002 school year. The following school site information was retrieved from the GTCC MCHS 2005–2008 School Improvement Plan developed in October 2005. GTCC MCHS communicates their beliefs as:

It is our belief that our entire staff and community are committed to working with every student to provide a smaller learning environment where each student's talents, interests, and individual are recognized. In addition to focus on academic achievement, it is incumbent upon us to provide the peripheral support that was not as apparent in the traditional high school. Utilizing our small school size, we will provide a nurturing environment where we will get to know each student and his/her family while providing counseling-based support that will help the student deal with a variety of social and family issues. With consideration for the internal issues that students have to deal with, it is our belief that focusing on student first will eventually lead to success in the academic area.()

The school improvement plan describes the GTCC MCHS target population as students who have dropped out or have considered dropping out of school, runaways, history of abuse, isolated within the traditional high school population, living in a dysfunctional family structure, or having some type of instability in their lives that makes completing traditional high school unlikely. The plan also addresses GTCC MCHS' belief that the dropout rate of Guilford County Schools will be reduced to the effort of the middle college option and that student services will build self-esteem, improve academic standing, and provide a vehicle for career possibilities and good citizenship.

GTCC MCHS has 135 students with an average class size of 15 students served by a full-time guidance counselor, career counselor, and principal. Teaching staff

includes 2 social studies teachers, 2 math teachers, 2 English teachers, 1 exceptional children's teacher, and 1 Spanish teacher. A Guilford Technical Community College liaison is assigned to the middle college high school to assist staff and students in access and success in college courses.

During the 2004-2005 school year, GTCC MCHS was selected as a North Carolina "Learn and Earn" Middle College High School. The primary goal of this initiative is for students to attain an associate's degree or 2 years of transferable college credit, while attending to a diverse student population comparable to district demographics, incorporating work based experiences, and partnering with middle schools to identify rising freshman for the early/middle college experience. It is important to note that most participants in this study enrolled at GTCC MCHS before its Learn and Earn Initiative participation.

GTCC MCHS School Improvement Plan included goals related to school culture, such as a safe and nurturing environment with support systems for building positive self-confidence and developing positive personal relationships with and among staff and students who enable students to perform at their highest personal potential.

GTCC MCHS Study Participants

The primary sampling method was *purposeful* (Miles & Huberman, 1984), a type of convenience sampling. Rubin and Rubin (2005) wrote that interviews gain higher credibility when the conversational partners have first hand knowledge and are experienced about the research problem. The researcher believed in choosing 12th graders to participate in the study, the conversational partners had a longer history of the

GTCC MCHS experience than students in lower grade levels. Due to the limits of the study by location, time, money, and respondents, the data collected from the participants may pose a lack of richness in the research study information. Patton (1990) suggested that participant selections made on a convenience basis alone are at greater risk of producing information-poor results.

Twelve African American 12th graders/seniors agreed to participate in this study including 6 males and 6 females, ranging in enrollment from 1 to 3 school years at GTCC MCHS. All students previously attended one of the 14 traditional comprehensive high schools in Guilford County before enrolling at GTCC MCHS. Participant recruitment for the study was designed by collaboration between the researcher and GTCC MCHS administrative team. The recruitment strategy goals was one that caused the least disruption of the instructional day and one that would attract a broad number of GTCC MCHS students without easily identifying the participant criteria—African American seniors. The guided study period that takes place 1 hour before classes begin each instructional day was decided as the least instructional disruptive time to approach students about the study.

The researcher was given permission by the principal to visit each of the 4-study period classrooms to inform students about the study, allow students to ask questions of the researcher, and enter a prize drawing of a mall gift certificate. The researcher communicated to students the purpose of the prize drawing was giving permission for the researcher to contact them by email, phone, or letter home about the invitation of participating in the study. Information on the drawing entry included: name, grade, ethnicity, name of parents, number of years enrolled at GTCC, phone number, email

address, and home address. The researcher communicated to students who they did not have to meet the research study participant criteria to enter the drawing. In order to protect participant confidentiality, the specific participant criteria was not communicated to the students. After the study period and recruitment sessions, the GTCC MCHS guidance counselor chose a random entry ticket as the winner and awarded the student his prize. Following the prize winner, the researcher carefully examined all entry tickets for African American seniors and contacted the 12 students by email followed by a phone call regarding their interest in participating in this research study.

Data Collection

Students who verbally agreed to participate in the study were sent a student assent and parent consent form the following week delivered in a sealed envelope by the career counselor to the students. Due to the expectations of the Guilford County Research Review Committee, the interview protocol was available in the principal's office 2 weeks before student interviews began to give parents the opportunity to review questions before giving consent. The assent and consent forms gave permission for the researcher to interview students and have access to school transcripts provided by the school principal to the researcher.

Document Review

The individual student transcripts were reviewed to review GPAs before and after enrollment at GTCC MCHS, attendance, and college courses taken. The data collected from transcripts were compared to note any patterns or differences in actual and self-reported perceptions of academic achievement and action toward postsecondary

opportunities. The GTCC MCHS 2005–2008 Improvement Plan was also reviewed to gain a research context for the belief systems and objectives of the research site.

Participant Interviews

The purpose of participant interviews was to gain insight into the perceptions of their experience regarding the impact of the GTCC MCHS structure regarding their academic achievement and motivation for educational success in completing high school and postsecondary educational opportunities.

With regard to believability in responsive interviewing, Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest that findings should be compared with other sources of information, such as documents. The data collected from the interviews and school records were compared to note any patterns or differences in actual and self-reported perceptions of academic achievement and action toward postsecondary opportunities.

The career counselor was appointed by the principal to assist the researcher in logistics for the study including accepting permission forms from students and scheduling interview appointment times that would cause the least disruption to the instructional day of participants. All 12 research participants took part in one interview of approximately 1 hour each. All interviews were conducted and school records data was collected in 1 week. The student participants chose pseudonyms to be used in this study in order to protect their identity.

Interview Questions Protocol

The interview questions of this study were initially created by assistance of the qualitative research expert of UNC –Chapel Hill’s Odum Institute, Paul Mihas, and Henderson and Milstein’s book (2003) *Resiliency in Schools* and the principles of

“responsive interviewing” as described in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The researcher submitted via email questions for interviews to the GTCC MCHS principal, who facilitated a discussion made up of the administrative support team and with over 40 years of public education experience including over 15 years of middle college high school experience and staff development between them. The team was given the authority to add or subtract to the interview questions submitted, and was sent via email back to the researcher. The researcher compiled the list of amendments and edited the interview protocol including main, follow-up, and probing questions. The revised interview protocol was reviewed with the Odum Institute Qualitative researcher, then sent to the principal for review before the interview questions were finalized. The conversational guide/interview protocol is located in the Appendix.

As stated earlier, interview participants are described as “conversational partners” and the responsive interview is described as a “structured conversation.” This interviewing method is cognizant that participants vary in their conversational style; “some conversational partners are self-revelatory, others are more restrained and formalistic. Some need prodding to elaborate; others won’t stop talking (p. 14). This researcher’s experience validates this notion due to the varied participants responses across the verbose continuum in needing few to all probing questions to gain understanding of participants’ perspectives.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) communicate that responsive interviews can be organized by combining main questions, follow-up questions, and probing questions. The intent of main questions is to scaffold the interview, and “encourage participant to talk

about their experiences, perceptions, and understandings, rather than to give a normative response, company line, or textbook-type answer” (Rubin & Rubin, p. 135). Main questions are formulated in advance to ensure coverage of the research problem. “Tour” is a term to describe the most general way main question initiation, where interview participants act as “guides” walking the researcher through their “turf.” Tour questions can be worded generally, such as “could you tell me about...? or what has been your experience...?” Rubin and Rubin describe these types of questions as intending to receive an overview of the happenings within a cultural area, evoke unexpected themes, and provide an unfiltered way for participants to communicate their experiences. Follow-up questions ask for further explanation of events, concepts, or themes that the interviewee has introduced. Probes help manage the conversation by asking for clarification or examples, and keeping the interview on topic.

The precise wording of main questions is not crucial, given that the responses of the interviewees elicit the understandings that address the research problem. The responsive interviewing method also suggests that effective interview questions should consider the factors that increase believability in the findings such as phrasing questions that avoid formalistic replies. The authors explained that authentic replies can be better achieved when the participants have had direct access to the information requested, such as telling a story about a topic, that indirectly provides information for the research question contain. The researcher then examines the various stories and responses to analyze for common themes. Rubin and Rubin (2005) also caution researchers in asking main questions of the participants before a relationship has been formed. In this research study, rapport building questions are built into the interview protocol.

As previously stated, the purpose of the “conversational guide” in responsive interviewing is to balance the desire for predictability of the responses with the flexibility to examine unanticipated topics. The intent of interview questions in the responsive model is to evoke detail through vivid descriptions, nuances, and a sense of “richness” with thematic material (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Vivid anecdotes allow readers to respond emotionally as well as intellectually, and allow readers to “picture” what the participant is communicating. The authors suggest that questions asking for a narrative allow clarity and freshness. Nuance is subtlety of meaning and brings to light that some experiences are not always true or not true, depending on the circumstances. Rubin and Rubin describe this as highlighting the “multiple shades of gray.” This desired feature can be attained by wording questions to avoid yes or no, such as “what do you think about...?” and back up follow-up questions. An interview that contains “richness” is described as one that contains various themes and ideas, often times including themes unanticipated by the researcher at the beginning of the study. This aspect of responses can be obtained by asking participants to elaborate on their responses.

Data Interpretation and Analysis

The student transcripts were provided by the principal and the 12 student interviews, approximately 1 hour in length, were conducted in 1 week. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission from the student, and real names were not used on the audio-tape. The student interview protocol/conversational guide was followed, researcher notes were taken during the interviews, and in-between student interviews, the

researcher recorded general notes and transcript data on the student data worksheet found in the appendix. The student data worksheet included:

1. the name of the student and pseudonym,
2. date and time of the interview,
3. transcript: GPA before and after GTCC MCHS enrollment,
4. transcript: number of absences for the 2005-2006 school year,
5. transcript: number of community college courses taken,
6. interview: postsecondary plans,
7. interview: example of resiliency at GTCC MCHS/ care and support,
8. interview: example of resiliency at GTCC MCHS/ high expectations,
9. interview: example of self-efficacy at GTCC MCHS/ performance accomplishments,
10. interview: example of self-efficacy at GTCC MCHS/ vicarious experiences,
11. general thoughts of the student and interview.

Following the recorded interviews, audio-tapes were transcribed by a professional and transcriptions were sent to the researcher electronically.

Coding

While reviewing the written transcripts several times, the researcher recorded notes on the data analysis worksheet provided in the appendix including evidence of resiliency components of the study provided by Henderson and Milstein (2003) and agreed upon evidence indicators of self-efficacy components by the researcher, GTCC MCHS administrative support team, and qualitative expert at the Odum Institute. Although specific questions/responses were initially aligned to components of resiliency

and self-efficacy with relation to student perceptions of their academic achievement and motivation for educational success, the “fluid” nature of the responsive interviewing methods allowed the researcher the flexibility to determine alignment to aspects of the blended theoretical framework and common themes.

Analysis of the data included a constant comparative method, involving the process of moving back and forth between collection and analysis of the data. Procedures included open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and theory development. Open coding allowed the researcher to classify themes and set up categories. Axial coding integrated themes with attributes collected within the data. Selective coding allowed the development of a description of the phenomena based on axial coding. The last phase of analysis, offered a theory of the impact of the GTCC MCHS structure on academic achievement and internal motivations for educational success through student perceptions of the existence of resiliency and self-efficacy enhancing support systems of GTCC MCHS.

Trustworthiness

The researcher was cognizant of possible biases that may have been incorporated within the analysis and interpretation of collected data. Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability are criteria used to establish trustworthiness when conducting qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was verified by providing triangulation and validity checks. The use of overlapping methods and triangulation demonstrated dependability. Confirmability was established through an audit trail including audio recording, transcripts, field notes, and school records documents. Rich descriptions of the participants’ interviews provided transferability.

Participant validity checks were used in this study to ensure data trustworthiness (Moustakas, 1994). At the end of data collection and professional transcription of the audio-taped interview, students were provided the entire transcript of their interview and were given the opportunity to clarify and provide additional information to better capture their intent of responses. When the researcher created a first-person narrative of the student interview, participants were given the opportunity to respond, clarify, and edit the narrative.

This study included the notion of triangulation, which enhances the density, clarity, and scope of the constructed ideas developed within the research process and helps to reduce biases from the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Patton (1990) characterized four types of triangulation—data, investigator, theory, and methodological. The use of multiple data sources, such as student records and interviews used in this study, represents the first type of triangulation. The investigator type including multiple researchers, was used in this study by allowing students to communicate with the lead researcher to provide comments and insight regarding the authenticity of capturing their individual student voices. Theory triangulation, including multiple perspectives to interpret the data, was used in this study through the blended theoretical framework of resiliency and self-efficacy theory. Finally, methodological triangulation including multiple data collection methods, was demonstrated in this study by including student transcripts along with interview data to develop common themes relating the research question.

Blended Theoretical Framework

This section will give a brief review of the blended theoretical framework, explained more in depth in the previous chapter including the literature review. The blended theoretical framework of resiliency and self-efficacy theory was created to better understand how this unique school environment provided students the necessary “protective” factors to educationally succeed while overcoming adversity as well as how the environment provided students with opportunities to increase their personal self-efficacy to take ownership and “approach” future educational opportunities.

Leaders in the self-efficacy research field (Pajares, 2002), suggest that more qualitative studies are needed to explore student perceptions on how self-efficacy beliefs influence their academic paths, academic attainment, and how self-efficacy beliefs influence their effort, choices, perseverance, persistence, and resiliency. Pajares also wrote about the need for research to explore the role of schools as social systems for cultivating and developing student efficacy beliefs. *In Resilient Classrooms: Creating Healthy Environment for Learning* (Doll, Zucker, Brehm, 2004), the authors’ notions align with Alfred Bandura (1986), the father of self-efficacy research, that “academic efficacy emerges out of the opportunities to tackle challenging learning tasks with the instructional supports that make success likely” (p. 10). Pajares also called for greater “intertheoretical crosstalk” and investigative collaboration to develop more complete understandings of motivational constructs.

Resiliency Theory

Resilience is a construct that describes the ability to avoid negative pitfalls, “bounce back,” although one is exposed to high levels of adversity. Educational

resilience is the likelihood of school success despite adversities and personal vulnerabilities within experiences and environmental conditions (Wang & Gordon, 1994). Resiliency theoretical frameworks allow educators to discover how and why students succeed in school, rather than identifying the achievement gap between other groups of students (Schussler, 2002). Schools can develop strategies to create organizational features and identify potential changes to practices and policies that may promote academic resilience (Borman, Rachuba, & Schussler, 2001).

The resiliency wheel developed by Henderson and Milstein (2003) contains a six-step intervention strategy to develop resiliency contained in six quadrants. The wheel includes two sides representing strategies to “build resiliency in the environment” and strategies to “mitigate risk factors in the environment.” The three quadrants on the left side of the wheel regarding building resiliency includes: providing caring and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation. The three quadrants on the right side of the wheel regarding mitigating risk factors include: teaching life skills, setting clear and consistent boundaries, and increasing pro-social bonding.

Resiliency is an appropriate theoretical framework for the research question because it is proactive (Duffey, 1998) and enhances the achievement and development of students. For this study, the researcher chose two components of building resiliency in the environment to include in the blended theoretical framework: (a) providing care and support and (b) setting and communicating high expectations.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-Efficacy theory stems from social-cognitive psychological theory, assuming that people will seek out tasks they feel competent and confident and avoid tasks they do not feel competent and confident. Pajares (1996) wrote efficacy beliefs determine the amount of effort people will exert on an activity, perseverance when confronting obstacles, and their *resiliency* in adverse situations. Therefore, when efficacy is at higher levels, the greater the persistence, effort, and resilience.

It is important to differentiate between self-efficacy and self-concept. Self-concept includes how an individual sees herself, how an individual would like to see herself, and how an individual presents herself to others (Rosenberg, 1979). Self-concept includes *general* attitudes about herself and her general outlook on life. Self-efficacy is domain and task *specific*. Self-efficacy beliefs of individuals are predictors and strong determinants of final accomplishments; therefore a major factor in human agency. The most functional efficacy decisions and judgments are those that lead people to engage in realistically challenging tasks that slightly exceed what one is capable of doing at a given time that also further develops their skills and capabilities (Bandura, 1986).

Self-efficacy expectations are learned and modified by experiences and processing of information. Sources of self-efficacy interventions include: performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasions, and emotional arousal. Bandura (1977) believed designing interventions to increase self-efficacy expectations by attending to the sources of efficacy information should increase approach versus avoidant behavior. For this study, the researcher chose two sources of building resiliency in the environment in the blended theoretical framework: (a) performance accomplishments and (b) vicarious experiences.

The most powerful source of self-efficacy expectations are believed to be performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1977, 1982). These accomplishments are associated with personal mastery experiences, which often lead to seeking out greater task successes (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Vicarious experiences involve the observation of other people's performance behaviors. Bandura (1986) believed vicarious experiences are the most influential when an individual observes others believed to have characteristics similar to her/himself and especially when the observing individual is uncertain about his/her own abilities.

The research regarding academic achievement and student motivation often explores the concepts of extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation. Pintrich and Schunk's (2002) textbook, *Motivation in Education*, define intrinsic motivation as motivation to engage in an activity for its own sake and extrinsic motivation as motivation to engage in an activity as a means to an end. The authors caution against viewing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as two ends of a continuum, accepting the notion that a high rating on one end automatically means that one is low on the other. They believe that it is a more appropriate to view intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as two separate continuums, each ranging from low to high, often being influenced by time across the lifespan and the context. They assert that students can learn for extrinsic or intrinsic reasons. However, evidence across grade levels suggest that intrinsic motivation positively relates to achievement, learning, perception of competence, and reduces anxiety (Gottfried, 1985, 1990). Students who are intrinsically motivated to learn participate in activities that enhance learning, attend to instruction, and apply knowledge and skills in different contexts. Intrinsic motivation can also be affected by a learner's curiosity being piqued

by learning activities that are different from their existing ideas, and students feeling a sense of control over their participation in tasks related to their own learning. As students develop new skills, and recognize their progress, they feel more efficacious about learning. Therefore, increased educational self-efficacy and positive outcome expectations heighten intrinsic motivation and lead to more learning (Bandura, 1986, 1993).

Several research studies make the connection between intrinsic motivation and learning. Intrinsic motivation positively relates to internal control and perceived competence (Harter, 1981, Harter & Connell, 1984). Students who believe they are competent, display greater intrinsic motivation than students who perceive their competence as lower (Gottfried, 1985, 1990). With respect to rigor, Harter's (1978, 1981) studies concluded that children judged their own competence higher and enjoyed greater pleasure from learning when they succeeded in more difficult tasks.

Bandura (1986) asserted that appropriate models and reinforcements affect students' internalization of self-rewards and mastery goals. He also asserts that motivation is negatively affected when students do not associate with peers that are mastery oriented or families do not reward their attempts.

The theoretical concepts and research regarding the relationship between intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and resilience makes a plausible connection with research shared earlier in the literature review concerning racial identity development and the educational environment (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990) as well as Borman and Rachuba's (2001) work that concluded that it is especially important for African American students, more than White and Latino, that the educational environment

promote resiliency strategies in an effort to increase academic self-efficacy and internal locus of control. The concepts of racial socialization and racial identity development in a hostile societal environment impact African American students' navigation through experiences and also affect perceived life options and chance of succeeding (Boykin & Toms, 1985; McCreary et al., 1996; Stevenson, 1994).

Summary

This chapter has addressed the research methods and design used in this study. A summary of each participant's interview narrative and the researcher's observations will be shared in chapter 4. Chapter 5 will give an overview of the entire research project, give conclusions, points of discussion, and recommendations based on the collected data in the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate student perceptions of how the Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High School structure impacted students' academic achievement and internal motivation for educational success to complete high school and pursue postsecondary educational opportunities. This research was designed as a case study as it sought to address individual student perceptions of their GTCC MCHS experiences. Of the 12 students who participated in the study, 6 were female, 6 were male, and all were African American seniors due to graduate in June 2006. The range of attendance years at GTCC MCHS for student participants varied from 1 to 3 school years.

This chapter includes 3 sections. The first section begins with a quote from the student interview and an "academic snapshot" of the participants from the archival school records including the number of years in attendance at GTCC MCHS, GPA before and after GTCC MCHS, number of absences during the current 2005-2006 school year, number of college courses taken, and postsecondary plans after high school graduation. This is followed by a participant summary communicating evidence found within the student interview data regarding the existence of resiliency and self-efficacy building interventions within the blended theoretical framework.

The second section provides a student narrative for each of the 12 participants in the first-person format illustrating the perceptions of their GTCC MCHS school experiences. The narrative is organized by providing data relating to the components of

the blended theoretical framework of resiliency and self-efficacy building interventions within the school structure of GTCC MCHS. The resiliency components include care and support, and high expectations as protective factors within the school environment for educational success. The self-efficacy components include performance accomplishments and vicarious experiences as interventions to increase personal capacity for educational success.

The third, and final section of this chapter will provide a summary of data from the participant interviews regarding the impact of the GTCC MCHS structure on the academic achievement and internal motivation for educational success of students reflected in the student interviews and school records data as it relates to the blended theoretical framework and research found in the literature review such as, educational success factors, predictors of college success, and predictors of dropout decisions. This section ends with a table summary of the “academic snapshots” of each student participant.

Beyonce

“I was doing okay in regular high school, but I wasn’t happy.”

Table 1

Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Reg HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 2005 - 2006	# of College Courses @ MCHS	Postsecondary Plans
Beyonce	2	9th – 1.9 10th– 3.3	11th – .0 12th – 2.3	11	0	Averett College – VA Sociology & Criminology

Beyonce’s Summary

Beyonce came to GTCC MCHS as an 11th grader due to her unhappiness in her old school with a negative social environment, and expressed that she contemplated dropping out. While attending GTCC her grades did not improve, her absences were still high during the 05-06 school year, and she voiced regret for not taking any college courses due to her 25 – 30 hour per week work schedule. However, she expressed a positive impact on her personal outlook toward school and her future since coming to GTCC MCHS. Beyonce communicated that the environment helped her to become more mature and take school more seriously (self-efficacy – vicarious experiences). She expressed that it was easy to meet friends at GTCC MCHS due to the small environment and teachers went out of their way to make her feel welcomed in classes and offered academic help to help her improve her grades and understand concepts (resilience – care & support). She felt that her teachers and the principal expected her to finish high school

and pursue college by bringing attention to her attendance and offering help to choose a major and apply to college (resiliency – high expectations). Beyonce demonstrated her motivation for educational success by cutting back her work hours, even though she had bills to pay, as well as the personal initiative to seek instructional help from teachers outside of class to make better grades (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments). After the interview was completed, she wrote an email to the researcher indicating her joy in receiving an Averett College acceptance letter.

Beyonce's Voice.

I hated my last school, typical high school teenage stuff; it was primarily different kinds of girl drama. I was doing okay in regular high school, but I wasn't happy. One day I just called and made an appointment and me and my mom came by. It just seemed like a good opportunity for me. This school makes me a lot more mature, because you know when you act too immature, people are looking at you. So it really helps you grow up, you know, and see how it really is when you get in college and stuff like the freedom that you get. You have to opportunity to do whatever you want, but it's all in how you do it.

I think my first class had like 10 people in there. And that just felt good because the teacher would sit down and talk, and make you feel warm and stuff. I really liked my classes when I first came here. It was easy to meet friends and stuff because it's not that big, so you know, we try to stick together, you know. In the beginning, if I didn't understand something, I was too scared to say I didn't understand it; I just wasn't focused on school. I had to retake that class last fall, and passed it the second time around because I wasn't working as much and asked more questions. My teacher helped me a lot.

It was a big shift for me in the beginning. I didn't have to be here until noon, so I started working in the morning from 5:30 until 10:00 a.m. everyday at Bojangles, but my grades went down a lot. Cutting back my work hours have put a strain on me because I've got bills to pay, like a car payment and insurance and all that stuff. I haven't taken any college classes here; I didn't want to get involved with that because I just wanted to focus on my high school classes.

When I was in regular high school, we didn't get too in depth on like what we want to do after high school and stuff. I'd just think about having as much fun as I can. But here, it's just like you realize since you're on a college campus, you get the opportunity to take college classes, so it's like gosh, people really want you to go to school and do good, so it just makes you feel like you can do more than less, you know. I think that my teachers would say that they're proud of me and that they're glad I didn't give up like quitting and not staying in school, because at the point I was, I was like, I don't even know why I'm still in school, I just need to drop out.

The principal, he stayed on me a lot, he'd go, "You know you've got to graduate." He would say "Do this, do that." He really helped me out a lot on what colleges I should apply to, and different things with financial aid and stuff like that. The principal even helped me pick out the major that I wanted to do. My plans after graduation are to attend Averett University in Virginia and study sociology and criminal justice. I wanted to go visit the campus so I talked to the principal and counselor, and they told me whatever day I wanted to go just bring the form back, and give it to him and say I was there. I'm really excited, because this week I'm supposed to be finding out whether I get accepted or not, so I'm a little nervous.

Brad

“I’ve been given a second chance, and I’m just happy I was given it”

Table 2

Academic Snapshot.

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Former HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 05 – 06	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
Brad	2	9th – 3.1 10th– 3.3	11th – 4.5 12th – 4.0	0	3	Culinary Arts Johnson and Wales

Brad’s Summary

Brad came to GTCC MCHS as an 11th grader due to the recruitment of his former principal, now GTCC MCHS principal (Mr. W). In his former high school, Brad was academically successful in a magnet program, but expressed general unhappiness with the negative school environment. Since coming to GTCC MCHS, his GPA has increased and his attendance remained excellent. Although Brad was doing well academically before his arrival to GTCC MCHS, he communicated that “his whole situation changed - he blossomed” (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments). These changes included his participation in school committees and increased positive social network of friends. Brad felt comfortable talking with teachers regarding personal issues and believed that

the clustering of high school students in college classes by the college liaison helped GTCC MCHS students support one another (resiliency – care & support). Brad also noted that the GTCC liaison placed students in college classes that would easily award transfer credit even if the student had not decided upon their next educational step (resiliency – high expectations). Brad appears to have possessed the skills and efficacy to actualize his dreams as a Johnson and Wales trained chef and restaurant owner with or without the GTCC MCHS experience. He did communicate that the experience of being on a college campus and taking college courses allowed him to grow up and really focus on his education (self-efficacy – vicarious experiences). It was evident through the interview with Brad, that he was a much happier student as a result of his enrollment at GTCC MCHS.

Brad's Voice.

I knew Mr. W (principal) from my old school, I was in a magnet program there for tele-sciences and engineering, that was all good, but it was the school environment outside of class that was the problem. It had a reputation of being a bad school, with kids that don't want to learn, and fights. That takes away from the education process, and that's something that I didn't want to put myself into.

My first year here, I always did what I was supposed to do and what I was told; I never really made friends or anything. But second semester I started making friends and opening up. People would say, "You know, you're more outgoing and stuff now than when you were here at the beginning of the year." I've blossomed and now they can't shut me up. At my old school, it's hard to even talk to people, because you just look at

somebody wrong, and they were ready to jump on you or something. At MCHS, I'm on the yearbook staff, prom committee, student council, and I'm doing this thing for Mr. E (counselor) where I am part of a panel in the community about racial issues and how it has affected me.

The teachers are very open here and will talk to you about anything. When I got into a car wreck here at school, the other person was not there, so I thought about not leaving a note on the car, but I talked to Ms. K (teacher), and she said that I did the right thing by leaving a note, and it wouldn't be as bad as I thought. This environment is different than high school because everyone is immature and stuff, when you get around a lot of that, you become immature yourself, and you really get off focus. Here, it forces you to grow up and what's asked of you in your college and high school courses, you have to be on your toes, there's only time for focus, studying, and your education.

My biggest challenge here was the college classes. They are different from high school classes, more demanding. When you only meet a couple of days in a week, the work is triple the amount as high school classes, and there's a bunch of required reading and stuff, so you have to push yourself and do the best you can. When MCHS students have to take college classes, they try to put you in with other high school students so we can help each other and have study groups.

Ms. P (college liaison) will come and sit down with us, and she'll listen to what our plans are after high school, and she'll try to set us up with classes that will transfer, so we'll get credit to transfer. Even if you don't have college plans yet, she'll try and set you up with beginner classes because she feels that you'll make a smoother transition into college. We pretty much see Ms. P everyday, she'll make sure that we are situated in our

classes, that we are going to them, and offer help if we are having problems with the professor, or need help.

When I came here, my whole situation changed, because it was a fun place. For one, you come here at 12:00 instead of getting up at 7:00 a.m. for school. The environment is totally different, and I think that's what makes you want to learn. I used to work full time in the summer, but now I'm part time and work between 18 – 20 hours per week after school. My plans after graduation, is to attend Johnson and Wales Culinary Institute with a major in business and culinary arts in the fall, and hopefully have my own restaurant by 30. They are giving me a \$2500 scholarship to go there. This Saturday, I'm going to go down to the school, learn about what is expected of me, talk about financial aid information, and stuff like that.

Britanny

“Like I’m going to stay at home with my Mom for the rest of my life? I’m ready to leave,
ready to go, make my own meaning in life.”

Table 3

Academic Snapshot.

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Former HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 05 - 06	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
Brittany	2	9th – 1.9 9th – 2.3	10th– 3.5 12th– 3.0	14	0	Social Work / UNC-G or NC A&T

Brittany’s Summary

Brittany came to GTCC MCHS classified as a 10th grader due to her poor grades as a ninth grader for 2 consecutive years at her old high school. Her grades improved tremendously, and she gained enough credits to be classified as a senior within 2 years at GTCC MCHS. Even though her attendance record was still relatively poor for the 2005–2006 school year, she expressed that her attendance at her former school was much worse. She expressed that MCHS teachers showed a willingness to help her make good grades, and offered tutoring sessions. (resiliency – high expectations). She communicated her reasons for coming to GTCC as being ready to learn in a college environment and graduate by staying away from the negative peer group and poor

decisions at her old high school. Brittany shared that she feels comfortable talking with her teachers regarding personal problems with the confidence they will respect her wishes for confidentiality (resiliency – care & support). Brittany communicated that being on a college campus and seeing older students from her neighborhood made her feel older and less apt to act in an immature manner (self-efficacy – vicarious experiences). She also admits she does not want to risk being kicked out of GTCC MCHS with negative behaviors. She communicated that she is a changed person and is “on the right track” since enrolling at MCHS and has applied to two universities in Greensboro with an intent to study sociology. It seemed clear from her academic record and sharing of her school experiences before and during GTCC, it would have been very unlikely that Brittany would be on the college path at her former high school (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments).

Brittany's Voice

I came to MCHS when my sister enrolled; she wasn't doing good at her old school and I wasn't either. I was kind of following behind everybody else. I would go like a couple of days out of the week, then stay home and hang out with my friends. My family thought it was a good idea, because they felt this school would offer me something.

I was scared at first because it was a new environment, but after a while, it got fun because the people that rode my bus were nice, and it seemed like everybody was friendly, and I enjoyed it. I was to the point where I wanted to learn, go ahead and graduate, get over with, so it felt good. We have friendly teachers here, they are so nice.

At my old school, I would never sit and talk to my teachers about problems that I was having. I can talk to my teachers about problems and they don't tell your business or nothing. If you go to them and talk, it's between you and them. The teacher showed that they could really help me make good grades, so I can pass. They offered tutoring and stuff for things I didn't understand.

I have missed a couple of days, but its not like I missed a lot like at my old school. Being here makes me feel older. I see older people from my neighborhood, and I'm like, "hey" you know? Coming from my old school here, I had to realize that I can't be doing the same things that I was doing there. I had to get on point, come to school, and do my work, or they were going to kick me out, and then where was I going to go?

If I didn't understand something at my old school, I was too embarrassed to ask them in class. But here, I feel comfortable to be myself and ask questions and all. Nobody is going to laugh at me. The teachers are willing to work with you, they'll say "come in the morning, and we'll talk about it." I'm having trouble in precalculus now, he'll explain it during class, or tell me to come in the morning before school and ask for help. If I don't understand the homework, I can come and ask him to explain it again.

I think my teachers would describe me as a good student, I hear them say stuff like that. I do my work, work hard, I'm helpful, a nice person, and easy to get along with. It's just different here. When I wake up in the morning, I know I'm going to school, so I go to school. At my old school, I'd wake up later you know? I feel happier coming here. There's not a lot of drama here, people talking about you and stuff like that. I just feel more confident. My old school was like a big fashion show. Over here, they say we don't have cliques, but we kind of do. They're all types of people, but it's not as bad as being in

a bigger high school. It's a more positive place, in the other schools, there's a lot of abuse. Like we don't have racists here or nothing like that. I'm glad I'm through, I've changed you know. I think I'm on the right track now since I've been here.

I want to go to college to study sociology; I'm working on getting out my applications. I applied for UNC-Greensboro and NC A & T already, places close to home. I am going to do one for Bennett College also. I am much more focused now. At my old school, I had no plans for my future. I was just falling in with what everybody else was doing, so it was like, I was stuck in life. Like I'm going to stay at home with my Mom for the rest of my life? I'm ready to leave, ready to go, and make my own meaning in life.

Chris

“I'm not used to learning like that, I had to advance.”

Table 4

Academic Snapshot.

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Former HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 05 - 06	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
Chris	2	9 th – 2.1 10 th – 1.1	11 th – 2.9 12 th – 2.3	10	2	Fire Protection - GTCC

Chris' Summary

Chris came to GTCC during his last 2 years of high school due to his negative social and academic experiences at his former high school. Chris indicated that the

college learning environment was much more rigorous and focused at GTCC, and he has changed as a result of the more positive environment (self-efficacy – vicarious experiences). Chris expressed that the classes are more difficult than at his old school and taking honors classes was not a choice (resiliency – high expectations). He also communicated that the teachers were nicer and offered to help him outside of the regular school hours (resiliency – care & support). Chris's perception of his grades indicates a big improvement. Chris's positive experience at GTCC prompted him to recruit one of his childhood friends to the school. He shared that they talk about their plans after high school often and recently attended a session together on financial aid. Although Chris failed the ASSET placement test the first time, he worked with the counselor willing to help him study, and then passed on the second attempt (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments). After graduation, Chris plans to continue at GTCC in the Fire Protection Program. This student appears to be extremely independent and capable of completing any goal he sets his mind to if the environment does not distract him.

Chris' Voice.

My counselor told me about GTCC, so I came here. My principal, Mr. W, was my principal at my old school, so I kind of followed him here. I needed to get away from the people I hung around and the trouble at my old school. My family said it would be alright to come here if my grades changed and was doing better than my old school.

I see it as an advantage of being in the same environment as adults everyday. If you start doing young things, you get around the wrong people. The small classes were a better learning environment, I'm not used to learning like this, and I had to advance. I

was used to at least 25 in a class, loud, no work, nothing like this. I was never really around White people like that, only Black students, because it's an all Black school.

When I came here, I was mostly quiet, I talked with just the teacher, did the work, got ahead, and that was it. The teachers were nicer than at my old school. The classes are a little harder here because they're honors, and you get extra credit. At my old school, you have to choose to take honors classes. I think the students here are smarter. At my old school, some of them would come to school and do nothing. My grades are way better than at my old school, C's and B's mostly, F's at my old school. I think the environment is helping me to succeed now, most of the kids at my old school, I knew for too long, I just knew too many people. My hardest class last semester was Algebra II, but I got through it. The teacher offered a tutor to me and would ask me to come and do makeup work or study after school.

My teachers and classmates would describe me as quiet. I don't talk really; I just do work and listen. The best thing that happened to me last week at school was I took an English test about Shakespeare that I think I did good on. I haven't really had any challenges since coming here really, working and learning. I failed the placement test the first time, but I took it again and passed it. Mr. E (counselor) would help me to study and remind me about the test. I have homework about every night in math. I don't really feel like I can talk with teachers when I have a personal problem. I don't know anyone really like that at school to talk about anything that goes on outside of school, I talk to friends. I talked one of my friends into coming here; I've known him since we were little. We talk about our plans after graduation all the time. We went to the session on financial aid at school, and got the forms filled out on the internet.

After graduation, I plan to do the 2-year fire protection program at GTCC. I've already done the placement test; all I've got to do is register. My dad helped me with that decision; he said it would be a good deal for me. I've changed since coming to GTCC. Before, I wasn't really focused on school, I just came to come. I didn't really know what I was going to do when I was at the other school when I graduated.

Ella

"I didn't want to fail, but I didn't want to reach out either, you know. A lot of kids get lost in their last 2 years of high school, because they feel stuck, and I understand."

Table 5

Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Former HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 05 - 06	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
Ella	2 ½	9 th - 2.9 10 th - 2.0	10 th - 3.5 11 th - 2.9 12 th - 3.5	9	4	Radiology – Forsyth Tech MSW Degree

Ella's Summary

Ella came to GTCC due to her negative experiences at her former high school with racial problems as well as the rigidity of the schedule that did not meet her child care and work schedule needs. She communicated that she seriously considered dropping out before coming to GTCC. Her school social worker was instrumental in helping her

with the transition. Ella communicated that the GTCC schedule allowed her to work her third shift job to help with bills at home and also allowed her to complete homework and receive help from teachers outside of the regular school day. Her grades increased after the transition and although she experienced challenges, has completed 4 college courses, which she loved (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments). Ella admitted that she was able to do the minimum amount of work in her former high school courses and pass, unlike the demands of college courses that required her to attend regularly and study. (resiliency – high expectations).

She admits that after the initial culture shock of the freedom, Ella believed that the college environment allowed students to behave in a mature manner (self-efficacy – vicarious experiences). She also pointed out that many students have come out of their shells due to the size of the school and the close relationships among GTCC MCHS students and teachers (resiliency – care & support). The experience with her ultrasound technician before the birth of her baby affected Ella's decision to pursue radiology. Ella took the initiative to obtain college credits while at GTCC MCHS that would transfer into the Forsyth Technical Community College program that she plans to attend following graduation.

Ella's Voice.

Kindergarten through eighth grade, I went to a private Catholic school, and then I came to public school. My old high school had a lot of racial issues, I wasn't really in the mix of it, but it was just not pleasant. It had gotten really bad by the time I left. The social

worker, Ms. V said that I needed to come here, because I told her that I needed to drop 2 courses, or I just wasn't going to come to school anymore.

When I first came here I was like, "How will we know when we've got a class? Where is the bell? Where do we put our books," you know? It was funny, but it's very, I'd say, maturing. There is more one on one here. I've observed other kids come out of their shells. At my old school, some teachers wouldn't even know a kid's name because they are so quiet; they just wouldn't talk to them. They wouldn't even look them in the eye you know? Here, they really make a point to open people up.

After the birth of my son, during second semester junior year, I started taking college classes; I thought it was like the best thing that anybody could ever give me, the best opportunity. The college courses challenged me. I knew I could BS my high school classes. I knew I had sick days that I could take and not be counted for, but if I miss over that, I know it's not a good thing. In college? Um, honey...if you have a 3-hour class once a week, one day is 3 days, so you automatically fail, you know? It just puts responsibility in your hands.

I work 3rd shift from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., 5 days a week, then I come to school all day, then take care of my son when I get home. My mom and I help each other, and I help out with the bills some. One time, I missed one of my college classes because I felt asleep in my car and overslept. Between working and my son, I'm wearing myself out. If I don't get homework done at school, it just doesn't get it done. I know I can come in here, and do it in the morning, during class, or stay after school and finish it. My most challenging class last semester was English 11, taken online, I would have liked to have had more contact, but it was an opportunity. If you can't do this stuff online, then you are

screwed. You can't BS the teacher in email. Your grades are based on merit and what you put into it. I love my college classes, you really make yourself. The teacher, either they like you or they don't, but regardless you're going to learn and it's up to you.

I'm working on the radiology program right now trying to gain credits to transfer to Forsyth Tech. The whole program is 2 years, but since I've already done 3 classes, probably less than 2 years. I wasn't really interested until I had my ultrasound, the girl told me the program is only 2 years and that she had 3 kids. It looked fun, so it was something that I was interested in. I'm also going to get my Masters in Social Work.

Somebody can come to this school and stand out unlike at a regular high school. If I didn't have Ms. V, I really would have dropped out of school, and a lot of people don't have that. I didn't want to fail, but I didn't want to reach out either, you know. A lot of kids get lost in that. I think a lot of kids get lost in the last 2 years of high school, because they feel stuck, and I understand.

Jason

“It was hard to learn and focus on anything,
because there was so much negativity around.”

Table 6

Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Former HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 05 - 06	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
Jason	1 ½	9th – 2.0 10th– 1.3 11th– 2.5	11th– 2.0 12th– 3.7	3	1	Computer Science UNC-G or NC State

Jason’s Summary

Jason came to GTCC MCHS in the middle of his 11th grade year, due to encouragement from his parents and a friend that attended GTCC MCHS. He believed that his old school was a negative place to be with many distractions from students who did not come to school to learn, unlike the GTCC environment that expected everyone to do well in school (resiliency – high expectations). He communicated that this aspect of the environment made him feel good about himself. He shared that the environment with adults promoted positive behavior (*self-efficacy – vicarious experiences*). Jason communicated a close relationship with teachers such as being able to talk about personal issues in his life and playing basketball together at the YMCA (resiliency – care & support). Although the first semester Jason attended GTCC MCHS, his GPA went down

from the previous semester, during his senior year, his grades increased drastically. Jason believed that changing his own mindset with regard to school and seeking out help from his teachers was one of his biggest challenges, but also the primary reason for raising his grades (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments). During his 1 ½ years in attendance, Jason has completed one college course in his chosen field, has followed through with college applications, financial aid, and spoken with a friend's mother about his desired profession of computer science.

Jason's Voice.

My mom works at another middle college; she told me about this one; my dad heard it was a good school too. I also had a friend that came here and told me about it. Once I got over here, I found out it was great for me. My teachers and counselors encouraged me to go, so it was all good.

Here, it's all a mixed culture, the school I came from was predominantly African American. At my old school, you had to keep to yourself, it was hard to learn and focus on anything, because there was so much negativity around that school. No one is trying to learn, everyone is skipping. The thing is not to come to school to graduate; it's to come to school, skip, drink, and do other things. When you come here, no one is pressing you to do negative things and they want you to get the material, study at home, and do well. I think the college environment makes a difference. No one is in a negative mind state; it's only about school, you know? They encourage you to get at your books and stuff. Being around adults teaches you how to be mature. I mean, when you're around older people, you can't be doing crazy things. It just eases things out better, I feel good about myself.

The biggest challenge coming here from my previous school to now, was in my mindset, I had to buckle down, do my school work, get my GPA up, get my grades up, and get focused on going to college, just getting in the mindset of learning. I got it together when I started talking to the teachers when I didn't understand things or was having trouble with my work. They would sit me down and go over things, I just knew I had to buckle down and do my work.

I think my teachers think that I'm a hard worker. They know I want to graduate, and they know I want to go to college. They know I won't do anything to mess up my grades. The teachers know the school I came from, they know it was real hard for people to graduate and get their work done, so they know that I'm trying to come up from that to this school, and be all about working to do good, and they help me out.

Outside of school, I play basketball every now and then with my teachers and friends from MCHS. We meet on the weekends and play at the YMCA. I don't think they do that with all the students; I think it's just a relationship with us. One of the teachers I'm real close with, I feel comfortable to go in there and talk to her about anything, problems in school and out of school. I would go to here and talk to her about problems in my neighborhood like violence; it affects me in and out of school. I have a cousin that's dying of cancer, and I talked to her about it, she even gave me her phone number to talk if I needed to.

My most challenging class since I came here was advanced functions and modeling. We have to get here at 11:00 for guided study, so if you don't know something, you just ask the teacher in the classroom. They will give you time if you have a test to make up or point things out that you missed, they'll let you correct it. I've

brought up my GPA and grades like that. I've taken one computer science class, I loved it. It was C++, something like that. After graduation, I want to go to college for computer science, either at UNC-G or NC State; I've already put in applications. One of my friend's mom works at a college and teaches computer science, so she kind of helped me get in the field and to understand what's going on. I've filled out my forms to get financial aid to go to college; I've done all that already.

John

“They think high schoolers don't know so much, I guess they are surprised when I tell them, because, they can't see the difference between them and me.”

Table 7

Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Former HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 05 - 06	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
John	3	9th - 2.8	10th– 3.1 11th– 3.7 12th– 4.0	0	9	Heavy Equipment Technology - GTCC

John's Summary

John came to GTCC MCHS due to his dissatisfaction in a negative, chaotic, school environment, with troubling racial problems. He has attended GTCC for the past 3 years, taken 9 college courses, and his GPA has increased each year of attendance since his arrival (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments). John believed his increase in grades stem from the motivation given from teachers and the positive and sincere relationships they foster with students (resiliency – care & support). He also believed the MCHS environment allowed him to be more mature and he is more motivated and determined to make better grades (resiliency – high expectations). John's pride was obvious when he talked about the look he enjoyed witnessing on people's faces when he told them that he was a high school student, not a GTCC student (self-efficacy – vicarious experiences). John sites his father as being the biggest influence in his immediate educational goal of an associate's degree, then a bachelor's degree in engineering, but he acknowledges that the MCHS allowed him to pursue this goal and not get off track (resiliency – high expectations).

John's Voice.

One of the reasons I came here is because my old school had a lot of racial problems. My dad was a teacher at my old school, and he received racial threats from students, I just felt like I needed to get out of there. The school was chaos; I didn't feel like they took proper justice on the students. When I first came here, I didn't know anybody, I was like, how am I going to make friends? How is this going to work out? But

after the first day, it was great. I met friends in class and at the socials, which is a great opportunity to get together with fellow classmates, and we played pool and stuff like that.

In my old school, classes was like 28 – 30 students sometimes, here, maybe 10 – 15, something like that, not that big at all. The classes here were more laid back. They offered you a chance to be more of an adult, having to do your work without them pushing you real hard to do it. Basically, they expected a lot of you, so like if you did anything that you weren't supposed to, anything bad, you know you had the option of being kicked out, so you were basically, supposed to act like an adult.

Well, my grades are As and Bs here, where I used to make Cs and Ds at my old school. I think the difference is motivation. The teachers motivate you more here than in high school because if you fail a test in high school, they don't care that much, but here, the teachers actually get on you and stuff. They say "you know you could do better" and stuff like that. I definitely feel like I can talk to my teachers if I have a problem. I've talked with Ms. K (teacher) about my old school's racial problems, and that's something I don't share with a lot of people, because every time I think about it, I get mad.

There is a high level of respect here, since we have smaller class sizes, they can pay more attention to you without discipline, and the teachers actually want to hear what you have to say. They weren't just there for the money, so that was good. Coming here made me more responsible, really. I feel more apt to do my homework and school work. I feel like this environment makes me more determined to make better grades and act as if I were an adult rather than a high school student. The best thing is seeing the expression on their face when you tell them that you're in high school, and they say how did you get in this college class? They think high schoolers don't know so much, I guess

they are surprised when I tell them, because, they can't see the difference between them and me.

My biggest challenge since coming here was my diesel class, a college course. I was kind of nervous when I went there, but I found out that it wasn't as bad as I thought it was. I had a guy in there that was 62 years old; he turned out to be one of my best friends; we still talk. Right now, I'm taking two college courses, these are classes I needed to take for the Heavy Equipment program, to finish out my associates degree, and they are also transfer credits. I've taken about 8 or 9 college classes so far. When its time to register for classes, I meet Ms. P (college liaison) in the computer lab, I tell her what I want and Mr. E (counselor) helps me find a class, and tries to fit it in my schedule, they pretty much takes care of it.

I think my teachers would say that I'm a good responsible student, a good leader. After graduation, I want to get my associates degree in Heavy Equipment Transportation Technology, which is basically working on 18 wheelers and off road equipment. After that, I want to go to North Carolina A & T University and get me a degree in civil engineering. My dad was probably my biggest influence in this decision, he put the automotive seed in my head, but the MCHS classes made it happen.

Lisa

“I probably have a friend in every color. I embrace it all now.”

Table 8

Academic Snapshot.

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Former HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 05 - 06	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
Lisa	2	9th – 3.1 10th– 2.3	11th– 3.5 12th– 3.3	1	4	Int Architecture at UNC -G

Lisa’s Summary.

Lisa has attended GTCC MCHS for 2 years due to discontent with her former school’s social and the existing racial problems. She lives independently in a townhouse with a roommate and works as a waitress to pay bills. Lisa’s attendance remained good and her grades are much better than her former high school record since her enrollment at GTCC MCHS. Lisa shared many of her thoughts with regard to how the MCHS environment and size enabled students from different backgrounds to interact positively and learn from each other (resiliency – care & support). She also expressed the availability and willingness of her teachers to give extra help with high school and college classes outside of the core school day (resiliency – high expectations). Lisa’s pride was apparent when she spoke about the college classes she has taken, that will transfer when she attends UNC-G in the fall. She noted that many of the people on campus cannot tell the difference between MCHS students and GTCC students and that is

because high school students are less apt to behave in inappropriate ways on campus (self-efficacy – vicarious experiences). Lisa expressed that many students work, have children, or live complex lives, and the staff at GTCC are flexible with the diverse situations of students. Lisa also expressed that the college classes taken in interior design piqued her interest to read books about the topic and influenced her goal to pursue a four year degree in the field after graduation at UNC-Greensboro (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments).

Lisa's Voice.

In my freshman year, I heard about MCHS, but I was like, oh, its high school, I don't want to miss my high school days, games, and stuff. Well about sophomore year, I got real tired of it. A lot of people at my high school can be really immature, and I'm really independent. By the end of my sophomore year, I was over it; I was like, I'm wasting time. I looked up MCHS on line and met with the principal, Mr. W, it was awesome. My old high school was predominantly White and sometimes race was an issue, you know? If you look around the campus, some people that you wouldn't think that you've ever hang out with, you talk to if they're a nice person. I think it's really good for prepping you for the world, interaction with everybody.

I'm technically, a college student now. My mom has moved to Charlotte, and she bought me a townhouse where I live with a roommate, instead of paying rent for an apartment. I only had to take one high school class this year, advanced functions and modeling, so I'm almost finished with my freshman year. When I transfer over to UNC-G, I'll almost be a sophomore. The classes are really easy to me, we have so much time,

and it's like 13 or 15 students. If you need help, your teacher has time before school, during class, or after class to help. They are really nice about that.

I feel very comfortable being around older people, the classes are really laid back, and most people don't even know the difference between us. They would never know that I'm a middle college student unless I opened up my mouth, and I rarely did. Nobody else is playing, laughing, and snickering, so you feel kind of stupid if you were, everybody else is sitting there quiet.

The work in the college classes was my biggest challenge coming here. My college western civilizations teacher was horrible, but Ms. K (teacher) offered to help me go back through the text and showed me how to summarize, without completely reading the whole thing. In my college English class, MCHS gave me a tutor that helped me write papers, because it's really hard when they don't teach you writing techniques, I'm like, how do I do this? The college teacher didn't tell me what I did wrong, and how to revise it, and it was just hard to change your thought patterns. So she really helped me out with that.

At MCHS, if you don't open your mouth, you're going to fail; you know what I'm saying? And I didn't mind that. At one time, they wanted college professors to give out interims, I'm like, it's a college class, and if you're on a real college campus, you can't ask them to do that. It's preparing you for college life. I've taken so many college classes; I can't even remember all of them. My most challenging course was precalculus, even though the teacher was awesome. I'm going to take statistics this summer.

Outside of school, I work at an Italian restaurant as a waitress. You know, a lot of us have jobs and we work really hard, like me and my mom. The house is paid for, but I

pay bills. Sometimes students might have a hard day, or have children, the teachers here are flexible about stuff like that. Since I've come to school at MCHS, I think I'm more goal aspirated. Freshman year, I kind of played, you know – boys. Now, I'm totally more mature. Before, I didn't know what I wanted to be, but I took a couple of classes, got into interior design, and started reading books about it. They have a 2-year interior design program here, but, I'll be going to UNC-G for the interior architecture program next year.

Everybody is so different here; it's awesome, you can't pick on anybody without offending someone because we're all so different. This experience has really opened me up. I find myself with so many different people, country, rocker types, skaters, people that I may not have spoken to at my old school. I probably have a friend in every color. I embrace it all now. I think that maybe if I didn't have this opportunity, I might not have been this open.

Michael

“I wasn’t in anything at my old school, I didn’t do anything really. Now, I’m the head of the student council.”

Table 9

Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Former HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 05 - 06	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
Michael	2	9th – 2.3 10th– 2.0	11th– 3.9 12th– 3.0	0	1	Computer Science - GTCC

Michael’s Summary

Michael enrolled at GTCC due to dissatisfaction at his former high school and encouragement from his family and school counselor. His older brother graduated from GTCC MCHS and now his younger brother attends with Michael. He has attended MCHS for 2 school years, his attendance is excellent, he has taken 1 college course, and his GPA has increased from his former high school. Michael enjoys being viewed as a college student and an active leader at GTCC. He communicated that he liked being around and treated like an adult. (self-efficacy – vicarious experiences). Michael expressed several examples of being able to talk with and receiving academic help from his teachers. (resiliency – care & support). Although burdensome at times, he felt that teachers expected him to do more than is asked of other students, and he is proud of that.

(resiliency – high expectations). He shared that the school environment made him feel comfortable enough to be a leader in school organizations, although he had not run for office since the fourth grade before enrolling at GTCC MCHS. (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments). He has taken the appropriate steps to continue at GTCC to pursue an associate's degree in computer science following graduation.

Michael's Voice.

I heard about MCHS from my mother. She read an ad in the paper, and said we should check it out, because I didn't really like the school I was at. My counselor pulled me aside and talked to me about it, she told me that I'd probably do way better at this school. When I first came here, I felt lucky, classes started at 12:00 noon and ended at 4:30, so I wouldn't have to get up early. The first day, during orientation, there weren't any college students here, so you basically were getting to know the other students and teachers. They talked about what we could earn if we came here, like get an associates degree, classes we'd be taking, and stuff like that. My older brother went here and graduated, and now my little brother is here also.

My attendance has always been good; I really don't have any reason to stay out of school. I like being around adults, because we get treated like them, freedom. The bad part is that it's easy for the high school kids to get blamed for anything that happens. At my old school, I wasn't in any activities, I didn't do anything really. Now, I'm the head of the student council. The last time I ran for office was in the fourth grade. I wanted to do some activities for our school because we weren't doing anything besides having

socials. So we set up activities like a MCHS prom, and a student and faculty basketball game at the YMCA.

At my old school, Spanish was really hard, but they passed me with a D. When I came over here, they had a real great teacher, she just taught it differently. The class that was the most difficult for me was advanced functions and modeling. That was the most homework I've ever had to do for a class. I tried to do it on my own, but Mr. F (teacher) helped me during class and explained it to me. In guided study hall, sometimes we talk about issues like sports or issues on the news.

I feel that I can talk to my teachers here, like Ms. K (teacher) and Mr. E (counselor), he's great. Ms. R (teacher) has helped me too; even though I think she's kind of hard on me, she wants me to do well. For example, last week, she made me stand up and do this problem and explain it to the whole class, and I was the only person who had to do it. I like being thought of as an adult; some people don't even know; they think we're in college, which makes me feel pretty good. I think my teachers would view me as a good student that always does my work, and that I'm a good Christian. I think my classmates would view me as focused.

My plan after high school is to go to GTCC for 2 years, and get my degree in computer science. My dad likes computers a lot, so that's where I got the idea. Mr. E (counselor) had some kind of workshop about financial aid one day. I'm trying to get my forms done now.

Royce

“When I get here, and see what it actually is, and all I have to do is get it, it’s really not that hard. All I have to do is study and show some dedication, and then its like, easy.”

Table 10

Academic Snapshot

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Former HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 05 - 06	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
Royce	1	9th – 2.3 10th– 2.5	12th– 3.7	0	1	AutoTech – GTCC Engineering – NC A & T

Royce’s Summary

Royce was supported by his Mother to enroll at GTCC as an opportunity to earn college credit and an associate’s degree in Auto Technology for free. Royce communicated his view on the importance of the good relationships he has with teachers and doing well in school (resiliency – care & support). He also expressed that he felt teachers would work with him until he understood the material. (resiliency – high expectations). His GPA increased considerably during his first semester at GTCC and he believes the school environment enabled students to be more mature unlike his former high school experience (self-efficacy – vicarious experiences). Royce also talked about how his aspiration to become a rap artist and his appearance often led people to view him

in a negative way, but the GTCC MCHS environment allowed students and teachers to talk, get to know one another, and be seen as the determined person he is. (resiliency – care & support). Royce shared how he has grown to understand that college was not as difficult as he had first anticipated. When he understood the relationship between working hard, dedication, and achievement, then “it was easy” (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments). Although he communicated that his professional goal of becoming a rap artist was decided upon in middle school, he has come to realize the difficult steps that must be completed before he can accomplish his goal and has established a back up plan of automotive technology as a career.

Royce’s Voice.

I came here last semester, my senior year. Financially, my mom thought it would be a good idea to come here, you can go to college while you take your classes, so you can get your associates degree and high school diploma at the same time, for free. I’m planning to stay here for the auto technology program, and then go to a 4-year college for engineering or music production. I’m looking for scholarships, but, like if I don’t get them, I can still have something to fall back on. At my old school, when I put down auto technology as my first choice and electronics as my second choice at the tech academy center, they just threw me in electronics, without telling me or anything, so that got me angry, you know? Here I don’t have that problem, because there’s a lot of need for auto technicians, and they help me get the classes I want.

This environment makes you mature up a little bit, because everybody ain’t playing like everybody at my old school, so it makes you mature. In the classes, in the

hallways, the students just see you and want to talk to you. I think everybody's got some type of stereotypical thinking in them. I think because I rap and freestyle, and got some skill, they think I want to fight people or something. After I get to talking to them, they're like, "dude, you're cool, you don't really want to hurt nobody, that dude, he's going somewhere."

Yeah, I can talk to my teachers, every teacher up here, they don't want to see anybody leaving, nobody being tossed out, and going back to their home school. I haven't really had any big challenges here. The way I look at school is the relationship with the teachers. They decide what kind of grades you get, so you've got to have a good relationship with the teachers. If you don't, they'll mess up your grades, they'll mess everything up. So basically, all of the teachers here are cool. I remember one time at my old school, we had this chemistry teacher that used to be a professor, and then he came to high school, so it was like he didn't really know how to come at high school students. The teacher that's doing chemistry at this school now, she explains it more. If you don't get it, she'll struggle with you.

This semester, I'm taking US History, Advanced Functions and Modeling, and English. I usually get homework everyday. My grades are good. They're straight, A's and B's. At my old school, I was like a C average student. Here, I don't have as much entertainment, people cracking on people, I admit, I did it too. When I first got here, I thought this was going to be hard. It's just like, you've got to study for it, because this thing isn't going to be given to you, and if you're not studying, it is going to be hard, extra hard. When I got here, and saw what it actually is, and all I have to do is get it, it's

really not that hard. All I have to do is study and show some dedication, and then its like, easy.

I haven't really experienced any changes in how I view myself or my future. I still like cars and music production. I sort of had it mapped out since I was in middle school. I came to the realization that you can be a rapper if you want to be, it's about the hard things you have to do before you actually get there.

Star

"I feel good about my grades now, at my old school, I didn't really go to class, so F's all down the line. My teachers would call my parents about it, but I didn't care."

Table 11

Academic Snapshot.

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Former HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 05 - 06	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
Star	2	9th – 1.5 10th- .75	11th– 3.25 12th– 3.3	6	0	Cosmetology & Business - GTCC

Star's Summary

Star has been at GTCC MCHS for 2 years, and enrolled due to her negative school experiences and drop out classification at her former high school. As a single

parent, she communicated that although she was depressed after the birth of her child, she received a great deal of support from the staff at GTCC and sometimes shares her experiences with visitors at the school. She believes that the small learning environment enabled better relationships with teachers personally and academically, as well as enabled better relationships with the other students (resiliency – care & support). Star expressed that her teachers viewed her as a good student, and were available and willing to offer help to grasp concepts during the class period as well as before and after school if she did not understand (resiliency – high expectations). She communicated that the college environment allowed students to act more mature and focus on learning (self-efficacy – vicarious experiences). Star shared that at her old high school, she received many failing grades, did not go to school often, and was considered a drop-out. She now considers herself a good student and is often asked by the principal to talk with interested GTCC MCHS students (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments). Star has not taken any college classes, but has decided to remain at GTCC to pursue her cosmetology license. She has spoken with one of the teachers in the program at GTCC and is aware of the requirements including the application, ASSET test, and number of class hours.

Star's Voice

I was considered a dropout at my old school and was going to work at my Dad's shop. I didn't care about school then, I was always skipping class, smoking, going to do something else, and it was kind of leading me down the wrong path. I found out about MCHS on the radio, so I called the principal and me and my Dad came here to visit.

I'm a single parent, and this has opened new doors for me. When I first came here, I was crazy depressed, and I got a lot of support from people. At the orientation, Mr. W (principal) let us know the different things that we had to do, mainly come to school everyday. It was pretty nice when I came here; we had smaller classes, so it made it more fun for the students to learn in the classes. This was way different than my classes at the other high school, sometimes 30 students in a class. Here, the teachers care about you, and they want to know what's going on with our lives, you know. If you're having a problem, you can go and talk with them. Everyone is paying attention in class, getting their work done, you can learn, so it's good. This is a more mature environment, because its college.

I feel good about my grades now, at my old school, I didn't really go to class, so F's all down the line. My teachers would call my parents about it, but I didn't care. My most challenging class at MCHS was physical science, it wasn't really difficult, just challenging, and all the formulas, compounds, and stuff like that. I had a good teacher that helped me; I made a B in that class. If I didn't know something, Ms. G (teacher) would go over it with me in class until I got it.

Everybody knows everybody here; there are only a couple of students who I haven't met yet. Everyone kind of gets along. We have socials once a month after classes for about an hour. We listen to music, there's food, sometimes a raffle with prizes. There are a couple of people that I talk to here, but I pretty much keep to myself. Right now, most of my friends don't go here and are working a job like me, trying to get out on their own, be more independent, and raise their kids.

Of course, I can talk with my teachers here; Ms. K (teacher) is my favorite. If I'm having a problem with my boyfriend or my parents, she will listen and help me come up with a resolution. We have a 10 minute break between classes and teachers are in the office between 9:00 and 12:00 in the mornings to talk with students, except when they are eating at lunch, then they'll kick you out. A couple of times, Mr. W has asked me to talk to visitors about the school, what we're doing, and my situation.

I think my teachers would describe me as a good student, that I'm good under pressure, and feisty. The students would probably say that I'm cool, she's alright. My plans after MCHS are to continue here at the community college and get my cosmetology license. I've known how to do hair for a long time and I thought I might as well put it to use somewhere. I have to complete 73 hours of class time and the salon before I can take the test. I've been down there to talk to the teacher about the program, you have to take the ASSET test and fill out an application. I think I have a lot higher attitude and more positive outlook on life than I did 2 years ago.

Victoria

“They give us some insight, you know,
but they let us make choices too.”

Table 12

Academic Snapshot.

Pseudonym	Years at MCHS	GPA Former HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 05 - 06	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
Victoria	2	9th – 1.5 10th– 1.7	11th– 1.5 12th– 3.0	1	0	Pediatric Nurse – NCCU or Duke

Victoria’s Summary

Victoria enrolled at GTCC MCHS due to her dissatisfaction with her former school, specifically her schedule of 2 math classes during the same semester. Although she admits that initially, she was somewhat intimidated by an environment with older students, she felt that the other MCHS students had close relationships with each other and the principal was visible and interested in students’ needs (resiliency - care & support). When Victoria made a low grade, she commented that teachers would often call her in to discuss the grade as being below her ability and expressed a willingness to provide help with courses and offered tutorials (resiliency – high expectations). Victoria expressed that the reduced course load of four classes and the numerous opportunities to speak with teachers during break and before and after school, allowed her to have a less

stressful, comfortable learning environment. The schedule also allowed for her grades to remain high in difficult subjects as well as increase her overall GPA due to her initiative to impact her own learning (self-efficacy – performance accomplishments). Victoria communicated that the best things about attending GTCC is experiencing college life and the opportunity to interact with a diverse student body (self-efficacy – vicarious experiences).

Victoria's Voice

I didn't really like my old high school; I had some terrible classes there, so that's why I came here this year. They put me in math classes back-to-back; I'd try to get geometry, then I had to switch over to Algebra II. I couldn't do math like that. My counselor told me about MCHS, I looked into it, and I pretty much liked it. My mom thought it was a great idea because of the math situation; she thought back-to-back math classes were too much pressure on me.

When I first came, sometimes I got a little nervous, just for the fact that I'm younger, and some people could be like 25–30 older, and I'm like walking around with them. In the cafeteria, we have our little section that we sit in, but there are college students around us, and that's fine with me. It's actually been less stressful here; I've got a little bit of freedom, and a little bit off my shoulders because of the fact that I only have 4 classes. The teachers are great, they're actually patient with us, and they help you. Mr. W (principal) comes up at lunch most of the time and he's greeting everybody, has lunch with you, and asks "how your classes are going." He's not always just with the teachers.

My stress has decreased a lot because I don't have a packed schedule, all those tests, and so much work. At my old school, I didn't have time to do anything. Here, we get a break in between classes, you know, and at least we can think about what we're going to do next. It's just very comfortable. They really help you, they tell you that you can come in the morning before school, and you know that's reasonable. If you need to talk to somebody, you can talk to somebody as well. They have like 2 or 3 times you can talk to them. They give us some insight you know, but let us make choices too.

I haven't really had any difficult classes. My most challenging was geometry last semester. It was a class on Novanet (computer based), and we had to learn it for ourselves, because it was independent. The math teachers told me that anytime I needed help, just come and ask, and they'd sit down and explain everything. I had to ask a couple of times, and that was a big help. My grades, gosh, they've improved from last year and the year before that. I never thought I'd get grades like that, you know?

The best things about being here is the fact that we get to experience what college is going to be like, and actually the diversity. There are a lot of different people in this world and you need to know the different traits, the different values that people have, the different thoughts that people have.

I think my teachers would view me as hard working, and I'm a good student. In Ms. K's class, there was this test we took, and I made a 70 on it; she came and found me in the hall, talked to me individually, and said, "We are going to help you make a higher grade on the next one, because I feel that you can make a B at least." She said if I would get extra credit if I came to her tutoring class, and of course my test grade came up; that's how I made a B.

My goals haven't really changed since coming here, they are the same, to study pediatric nursing at North Carolina Central or Duke University. This is a very good school, there's a lot of help here if you want the help. There's a lot of freedom, but still you've got to get your work done, too.

Summary of Participants' Results

Based on the interviews with participants and school records data, the GTCC MCHS structure impacted students' academic achievement and internal motivations for educational success to complete high school and pursue postsecondary educational goals in numerous ways. While each student's GTCC MCHS experience was unique, four overarching themes emerged: (a) the school structure enabled healthy relationships between and among teachers and students; (b) the school structure enabled students to identify themselves as smart and mature students; (c) the school structure allowed students close access to college courses and resources to pursue postsecondary opportunities; (d) the school structure enabled students to embrace personal responsibility and the self-efficacy necessary to achieve their educational goals.

The next chapter will further explore these themes and the relationship of the student perceptions regarding the GTCC MCHS structure with the components of the blended theoretical framework including resiliency building intervention strategies and sources of self-efficacy. The following data provides a context for the impact of the GTCC MCHS experience for the 12 African American 12th grade student participants.

Their reasons for enrolling at GTCC MCHS:

1. Eleven of the 12 student participants cited negative social or academic experiences in their former high school as the primary reason for enrolling at GTCC MCHS.
2. Two students contemplated dropping out before acceptance at GTCC, and 1 student was officially classified as a drop-out before re-enrolling at GTCC.
3. Student participants ranged in attendance from 1 to 3 complete school years.

Academic Achievement and Attendance:

1. The average school year GPA before enrolling at GTCC was 2.19 at the former high schools.
2. The average school year GPA after enrolling at GTCC was 3.17
3. Eleven out of 12 student GPAs increased after enrolling at GTCC, one students' GPA decreased.
4. Number of absences varied from 0–14 up to the time of data collection
5. Six students had 3 or fewer absences and six students had 6 or more absences.

Postsecondary Planning:

1. Eight out of 12 students completed at least one college course while attending GTCC, and four students completed three or more college courses.
2. Seven of the 12 students plan to remain at GTCC, attend another NC Community College, or culinary arts school for an associate's degree program.
3. Five students plan to attend a 4-year college or university to pursue bachelor's degree.

4. All students had taken at least one concrete step toward their next educational goal after high school graduation, such as taking a related college course while still in high school, filling out the application, a college visit, filling out the financial aid forms, arranging a discussion with a teacher in the program, or completing the placement test.

Table 13

School Records

Students	Years at MCHS	GPA Reg HS	GPA MCHS	Absences 2005 - 2006	# of College Courses	Postsecondary Plans
Beyonce	2	9th – 1.9 10th– 3.3	11th – 2.0 12th – 2.3	11	0	Averett College – VA Sociology & Criminology
Brad	2	9th – 3.1 10th – 3.3	11th – 4.5 12th – 4.0	0	3	Culinary Arts & Business Johnson & Wales
Brittany	3	9th – 1.9 9th – 2.3	10th – 3.5 12th – 3.0	14	0	Social Work UNC-G or NC A&T
Chris	2	9th – 2.1 10th – 1.1	11th – 2.9 12th – 2.3	10	2	Fire Protection - GTCC
Ella	2 ½	9th - 2.9 10th– 2.0	10th – 3.5 11th – 2.9 12th – 3.5	9	4	Radiology Forsyth Tech MSW
Jason	1 ½	9th – 2.0 10th– 1.3 11th – 2.5	11th – 2.0 12th – 3.7	3	1	Computer Science – UNC-G or NC State

John	3	9th - 2.8	10th – 3.1 11th – 3.7 12th – 4.0	0	9	Heavy Equipment Technology - GTCC
Lisa	2	9th – 3.1 10th – 2.3	11th – 3.5 12th – 3.3	1	4	Interior Architecture at UNC -G
Michael	2	9th – 2.3 10th – 2.0	11th – 3.9 12th – 3.0	0	1	Computer Science - GTCC
Royce	1	9th – 2.3 10th – 2.5	12th – 3.7	0	1	Automotive Technology – GTCC Engineering – NCA&T
Star	2	9th – 1.5 10th - .75	11th– 3.25 12th – 3.3	6	o	Cosmetology & Business Admin GTCC
Victoria	1 ½	9th – 1.5 10th– 1.7	11th – 1.5 12th – 3.0	1	0	Pediatric Nursing NCCU or Duke

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The final chapter of this dissertation explores this study in three sections. The first section is a review of the background and statement of the problem, including a review of the methodology used in the study, and summary of the results found in Chapter IV. The second section includes a discussion of the findings, including an interpretation based on previous research, and common themes that emerged within the study. The third and final section includes the implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

Background of the Study

As previously stated, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate student perceptions of how the Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High School structure impacted students' academic achievement and internal motivation for educational success to complete high school and pursue postsecondary educational opportunities.

The data was examined through a blended theoretical framework, created by the researcher, including the existence of resiliency building interventions and sources of self-efficacy provided within the school environment. Resilience is a construct that describes the ability to avoid negative pitfalls, "bounce back," although one is exposed to high levels of adversity. The blended theoretical framework in this study focused on two intervention strategies for building resiliency in the environment based on Henderson and Milstein's (2003) intervention wheel: providing care and support and setting and communicating high expectations.

Bandura's self-efficacy theory asserts that people will seek out specific tasks they feel competent and confident, and avoid tasks in which they do not feel confident and competent. This self-reflection process, how a person thinks about themselves regarding a specific task, mediates between their knowledge and future action.

The blended theoretical framework in this study focused on 2 intervention strategies designed to increase approach versus avoidant behavior based on Bandura's self-efficacy research (1977, 1986): performance accomplishments, associated with personal mastery experiences, and vicarious experiences, involving modeling and observations of other people's performance behaviors.

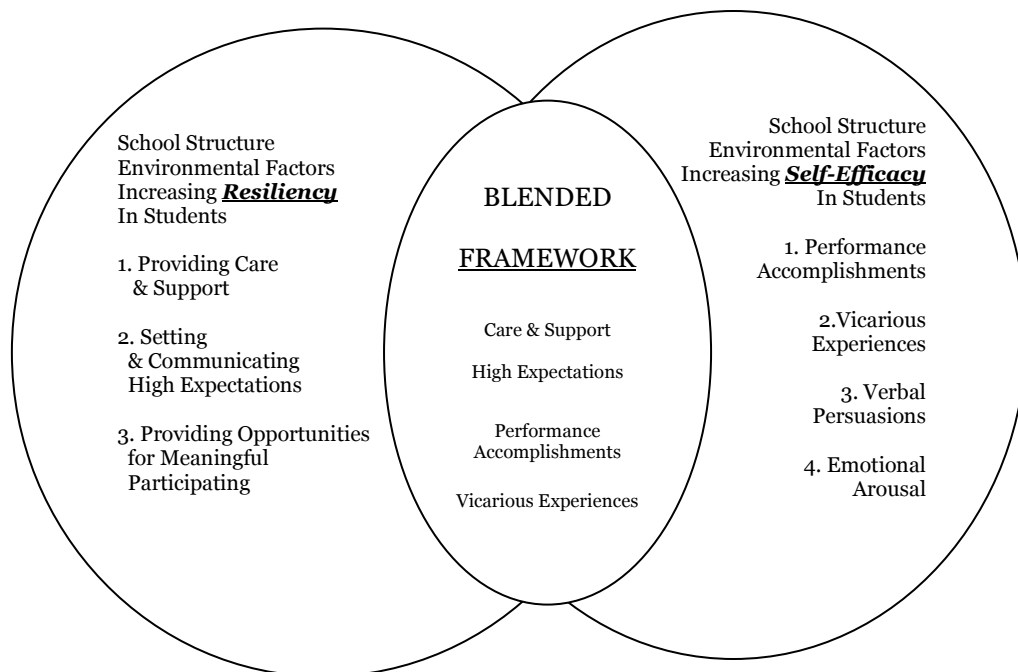


Figure 3. Blended framework.

Methodology

This study was designed as a qualitative case study using student transcript information and responsive interviewing methods (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) as the primary sources for data collection and analysis. This case study explored 12 African American 12th grade student perceptions at the first middle college high school that opened in North Carolina and the Guilford County school district – Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High school (GTCC MCHS). The participants were interviewed about their perceptions, motivations, and achievement while attending GTCC MCHS. Student interview questions were derived from two intervention strategies from Henderson and Milstein's (2003) resiliency wheel and two self-efficacy sources from the research of Bandura (1986) and Pajares (1996).

Summary of the Results

The intent of this research was to listen to the students' voices regarding their educational experience and perceptions in this specific reform effort of a middle college high school. The data results in Chapter IV including the student interviews and school records revealed that the GTCC MCHS structure impacted students' academic achievement and motivation for educational success in numerous ways. The researcher found that the data showed four themes within the GTCC MCHS structure; (a) enabled healthy relationships between and among teachers and students, (b) enabled students to identify themselves as smart and mature students, (c) allowed students close access to college courses and resources to pursue postsecondary opportunities, (d) enabled students

to embrace personal responsibility and the self-efficacy necessary to achieve their educational goals.

Discussion of Findings and Relationship to Previous Research

In this section, themes are explored within the resiliency and self-efficacy building intervention strategies that existed within the school culture as perceived by the student participants.

Theme 1: Healthy Relationships

The researcher found the data to reveal that the school structure of GTCC MCHS enabled healthy relationships between and among teachers and students. Students gave multiple examples identifying various ways that teachers demonstrated the resiliency building intervention, care and support, through their interest in students' academic and nonacademic needs. Many communicated that the small learning environment allowed teachers to give more attention to students in class, enabling an opportunity for teachers to understand the complex and diverse lives of students in their classrooms. All students expressed how the schedule allowed multiple opportunities to interact with their teachers outside of class, mornings from 9:00–12:00, study period from 11:00–12:00, afternoon break, and after school. Students also shared a close connection with the principal, college liaison, and guidance counselors.

Many students commented that they felt comfortable talking with teachers about non-school issues such as their home life, former school experiences, college/career mentoring, and various other life issues that students faced on a daily basis. Students

perceived that their teachers' understanding of them as a whole person, allowed them to be more flexible with work schedules, parenting issues, academic support, and other general problems. Students communicated that the GTCC MCHS structure enabled better relationships with other students. They believed that since the school was small, all MCHS students were able to get to know one another on a personal level, without some of the assumptions of clique affiliations as in their former high school.

Some students shared that their former high school was predominantly White or Black, and their being pleased with the diversity of the GTCC MCHS campus and getting to know students from different backgrounds. GTCC MCHS organized student socials for students to interact, but most students expressed their positive interaction and friendships that developed informally, such as on the bus, cafeteria, and in class. Some students talked about how they could be "noticed" and take on leaderships roles at GTCC MCHS versus their experiences at their former comprehensive high schools.

Relationship to previous research. Several studies relate to the participants' perceptions that the GTCC MCHS structure enabled healthy relationships between and among students and teachers

Susan Garber's (2002) qualitative research study using open-ended interviews with students to create a portrait of resistant learners and their perceptions of school concluded that the students were more likely to achieve in a class that they enjoyed and for teachers that they felt cared about them as individuals, who were willing to talk to students about personal problems, and come early or stay late to help students with academic difficulties. They desired teachers who possessed the ability to control their

students, a caring attitude, a willingness to help, and knowledge of their subject matter, and an attempt to employ diverse techniques and materials.

Brown-Saliwanchik's (2005) study explored the benefits of a sense of belonging to their communities, through focus group interviews. Many students related a sense of community to having positive relationships with adults and peers within that community. Students reported a stronger "sense of belonging" with their Upward Bound Community, commenting that the culture offered them a "safe" place where they "can be themselves" while developing skills necessary to help them in the future. The study concluded that teens still needed adults to care about them, even more than peers. For many students, care was reflected in mutual respect, such as being able to talk with teachers without the power differential. A large number of students, 83%, believed that the Upward Bound community had significantly impacted their lives and "selves," such as self-confidence, awareness of other's feelings, and positive social and academic growth. Students felt they were motivated learners in an atmosphere of care and respect.

Schussler's (2002) study used student perceptions to explore an alternative school, examining how students at-risk of dropping out perceived their educational environment within a learning community construct. Student perspectives reflected the importance of opportunities to succeed, flexible avenues by which students could achieve success, and the perception that students were respected by peers and teachers. These factors resulted in students' positive attitude toward their school experiences as well as their continued attendance in school.

Backstrom's (2004) qualitative case study examined teachers and students' experiences at a middle college high school. Teacher reflections stressed the advantages

of a small school size allowing new types of relationships with students and higher expectations. Teachers perceived that they had more time to attend to students' problems and create higher levels of accountability simultaneously. Veteran teachers constructed more compassionate, accepting types of relationships, balanced between flexibility and firmness. Teacher and student commitment had a reciprocal nature. Teachers experienced an increased sense of self-efficacy and became more invested in their students. Then students, in turn, felt compelled to work harder in response. Students attributed their past failings in larger high schools to uncommitted teachers and their current success to more caring teachers. This study concluded that in order for vulnerable students to internalize higher expectations, they needed to have adults first hold such expectations for them.

Cavalluzzo, Jordan, and Corallo's (2002) study included five dual enrollment/middle college high schools on college campuses in Florida, California, Michigan, and Tennessee. Various focus groups including the principal, guidance counselor, college faculty, students, and parents were used to collect data for the study. Conclusions regarding effective leadership included: a strong principal with a collaborative leadership style, a clear understanding of the needs of the target student population, and staffing with caring faculty to create a small school atmosphere.

Theme 2: Self-Identity as Smart and Mature

The data showed that the school structure of GTCC MCHS enabled students to identify themselves as smart and mature students. The average school year GPA rose from 2.19 at the former high schools to 3.17 after enrolling at GTCC MCHS. Two

students contemplated dropping out before acceptance at GTCC, and 1 student was officially classified as a drop-out before reenrolling at GTCC.

Students gave multiple examples identifying various ways that teachers showed resiliency building interventions such as care and support and high expectations. Most students shared that they have been told or believed their teachers viewed them as smart or as a good student. They also reported high expectations from their teachers shown by their willingness to not accept low achievement or not demonstrating their grasp of important academic concepts. Students expressed that teachers would “struggle with them” in class, offer tutoring support, or willingness to help outside of class to gain the skills for academic success. The school structure expected and supported students to go to college and gain college credit, through the assistance of the counselor, college liaison, principal, and teaching staff. Students saw themselves as smart, mature, college students already.

All students spoke about how the college environment impacted their maturity and focus on their education while attending GTCC MCHS. Most students cited negative reasons for transferring out of their former high school. Many students described their former peer group and school environment as negative or nonpurposeful, and some fell into the “mix” of inappropriate and counter-productive behavior, such as poor attendance, skipping classes, low effort with coursework, arguments with other students, and “cracking on people.”

The vicarious experiences and performance accomplishment components of the self-efficacy building interventions blends with this theme because many students expressed how proud they felt when college professors or older classmates could not

identify them as high school students, due to their maturity and academic success in class. Students seemed to have changed the way they viewed themselves as smart and mature as a result of personal mastery experiences of taking college courses and social acceptance without being noticed as high school students. Some students also expressed how they perceived college life differently after they experienced success in the MCHS environment, such as developing a focused mindset, seeking out academic help, getting on the right track, working hard, and applying dedication—“then, it’s easy.”

Relationship to previous research. Several studies relate to the participants’ perceptions that the GTCC MCHS structure enabled students to self-identify as a smart and mature student supports previous research.

The tracking research of Yonezawa, Wells, and Serna (2002) of 6 high schools found that although some barriers had been lifted, many minority and low-track students consistently did not take advantage of honors courses made more available to them due to unwelcome feelings in majority-White honors courses, feelings of inadequacy, and a determination to remain in the familiar safe classes predominantly made up of minority students. The GTCC MCHS student participants in the study all expressed positive outlooks about themselves as smart and mature academic students, had positive feelings regarding their teachers’ view of them as students, and believed that the college environment was composed of smart and mature students. Many students talked positively about their exposure to more student diversity and “openness” as a result of their enrolling at GTCC MCHS.

Cavalluzzo, et al’s (2002) study included 5 dual enrollment/middle college high schools on college campuses found that student perspectives reflected a sense of

community resulted from the small size of the school and expressed an appreciation for being accepted by everyone. Students viewed themselves as having a common purpose to do well academically and attend college. They also described an environment with fewer social conflicts that took up time and attention at their previous schools. Students reported that the college environment set a tone of higher expectations for academics and behavior, and enjoyed being treated as responsible young adults. The study concluded that the individualized instruction and guidance-based approach related to treating each student as a unique case. Every student was seen as an autonomous young adult, capable of doing high quality work and responsible for his or her own actions; thus, the ultimate goal of the program was to provide the necessary support and guidance for students to achieve to their highest potential.

Smoot's (2005) study employed a mixed method research methodology using quantitative data collected from the California Department of Education comparing demographic and academic test scores from middle college high school programs and qualitative data gathered through interviews with a sample of 12 students enrolled in two different middle college high school programs. The first qualitative research question sought to discover the students' perceptions of the middle college program. One of the patterns gleaned from student interviews was their middle college program maintained high expectations of the students in the area of academic achievement as well as discipline. The second qualitative research question sought to discover the factors that led to the students' academic success. One of the patterns that emerged from the data were that most students identified themselves as academically successful.

Theme 3: Close Access to College Courses and Postsecondary Resources

The researcher found the data to reveal that the school structure of GTCC MCHS allowed students close access to college courses and resources to pursue postsecondary opportunities. Eight out of 12 students completed at least one college course while attending GTCC, and 4 students completed three or more college courses. Students gave multiple examples identifying various ways that the staff and environment supported resiliency building interventions such as care and support and high expectations as well as the self-efficacy building intervention of vicarious experiences related to this theme. Students communicated high levels of support to enroll in college courses at GTCC that aligned with their educational and career goals, through the help of the college liaison and guidance counselors.

The vicarious experience of students attending high school on a college campus, enabled students to identify with being a college student already. One student's primary reason for enrolling at GTCC was the free access to the college courses and potential for scholarships.

Student participants reflected a broad range of career and educational goals before enrolling at GTCC. Some students expressed that they had already made their decision, some students were inspired by a college course that piqued their interest, and some students were influenced by their parents or other experiences. Students communicated that the college liaison and counselor would often put students in college courses that would easily transfer, even if they were undecided of their major or postsecondary next step. Of the 4 students who did not take college courses, some expressed regret for not taking the opportunity. Many students talked about the support of the principal and other

staff in helping them decide on a major and pushing them to fill out college applications in a timely fashion. The flexibility of the school structure also enabled students to attend workshops related to financial aid, the ASSET placement test, and schedule appointments with teachers and directors of the college programs of interest to them on the GTCC campus.

Relationship to previous research. Several studies relate to the participants' perceptions that the GTCC MCHS structure enabled students close access to college courses and resources to pursue postsecondary opportunities supports previous studies by various researchers concluding that educational support and career guidance is an important variable in school success for African American students (Gandara & Bial, 2001; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). This theme also connects with research regarding the predictors of college success for minority students concluding that fitting in, social adjustment, and feeling attached to college, especially when students of color attend predominantly nonminority institutions, were critical factors to retention and graduation (Schwartz & Washington, 2002). The GTCC student participants expressed support and frequent contact with the college liaison and guidance counselors to enroll and be successful in the college courses that matched their postsecondary aspirations as well as numerous opportunities to speak with college staff regarding specific programs requirements, placement tests, and financial aid.

Lotkowski, Robbins, and Noeth's (2004) report provided information from a major study regarding the influence of nonacademic factors, alone and combined with academic factors, on student retention and performance at 4-year colleges and universities. A meta-analysis technique was used to identify the non-academic factors

that had the most salient relationship to post-secondary education retention. The findings indicate that the non-academic factors of academic related skills, academic self-confidence, academic goals, institutional commitment, social support, certain contextual influences (institutional selectivity and financial support), and social involvement all had positive relationship to retention. The study concluded that students who master course content, but fail to develop adequate academic self-confidence, academic goals, institutional commitment, and social support and involvement may still be at risk for dropping out. Recommendations of the study include that colleges and universities take an integrated approach in their retention efforts that incorporates both academic and non-academic factors into the design and development of programs to create a socially inclusive and supportive academic environment that addresses the social, emotional, and academic needs of students.

Theme 4: Personal Responsibility and Self-Efficacy to Achieve Educational Goals

The researcher found the data to reveal that the school structure of GTCC MCHS enabled students to embrace personal responsibility and the self-efficacy necessary to achieve their educational goals. Students gave multiple examples identifying their personal action toward achieving educational success, both in high school and postsecondary pursuits. All students had taken at least one concrete step toward their postsecondary educational goal after high school graduation, such as: taking a related college course, filling out the college application, a college visit, filling out financial aid forms, arranging a discussion with a teacher in the program, or completing the ASSET placement test.

The performance accomplishment component of self-efficacy building interventions is related to this theme due to the connections students made between their action to seek out help and a positive outcome reflected in a better grade, passing a test, or gaining information about a particular program or university.

The GTCC MCHS structure gave multiple opportunities for students to conference with teachers and gain information, but students expressed not feeling “forced” to do so. Students perceived they were supported by caring adults, believed they were viewed as smart and mature students by their teachers and classmates, perceived they had numerous opportunities to conference with adults and seek out information, but ultimately students perceived that their educational fate was up to them and their personal action to make it happen. Many students gave examples of their agency to attend tutorial sessions, asking questions in class, meeting with teachers before school which positively affected their academic achievement. Some students expressed that the college environment should make students “speak up” to ask for help or they would fail.

Regarding postsecondary plans, students seemed very knowledgeable about their aspiring postsecondary institution including: the number of credits needed for a licensed program, the specific majors or programs that the university or community college offered versus other campuses, and the second degree they would attain after their initial goal was completed. Students took it upon themselves to schedule college visits on their school of choice, spoke with program directors at GTCC, and talked with adults in and outside of their family to gather information about a particular field.

Relationship to previous research. Several studies relate to the participants’ perceptions that the GTCC MCHS structure enabled students to embrace personal

responsibility and the self-efficacy necessary to achieve their educational goals. The 2002 Middle College Consortium study indicated that students attending middle and early college high schools left with a greater sense of personal responsibility for their education and higher levels of motivation for learning. This research concluded that students experienced academic success more often, therefore instilled hope for the future within students due to the school's focus on nonacademic needs to reduce fear and anonymity, increase career aspirations, and provide positive role models on a college campus. Students at GTCC MCHS communicated that the school structure allowed them to feel and act as adults and the school schedule enabled multiple opportunities for students to meet with teachers and other MCHS GTCC staff regarding academic and registration support for high school courses, college courses, and postsecondary pursuits. Students expressed that although these opportunities were available and communicated often, it was the expectation among the students and the staff that students take the personal responsibility and initiative to receive help. The self-efficacy regarding control of their own educational success was an experience that was new to many of the student participants.

Cole & Denzine's (2004) study explored the relationship of explanatory style and self-systems (including self-esteem and self-efficacy) and motivation of students who were dissatisfied with their performance in a particular class. A finding of the study was the confirmation that situated variables such as self-efficacy provided the strongest explanation of a student's motivation and general self-esteem seemed to play a minimal role in explaining a student's motivation. The results from this study further support the contention that student's perceptions of their abilities and confidence for completing a

task are strongly related to their motivation within the given situation. In this study, students who perceived that they had no competence to handle the situation of “I’m not doing as well as I would like to” tended to display a higher motivation to overcome this situation.

Smoot’s (2005) study gathering qualitative data was through interviews of 12 students enrolled in two different middle college high school programs located in Southern California, found that students had their own internal drive and sense of motivation, and the students had clear goals for their career choices and well-defined college paths. The participants could describe their choice for college major and the college degree for which they were aiming, and the amount of time needed to obtain their degree. They also had personal visions for what they could become, and they knew the path to take and what steps they would be required to accomplish their goals.

Implications for Practice

The blended theoretical framework of resiliency and self-efficacy theory was created to better understand how this unique school environment provided students facing adversity the necessary “protective” factors to academically succeed with support from caring adults setting high expectations as well as how the environment provided students with the personal efficacy to take ownership and seek out or “approach” educational opportunities through vicarious experiences and other performance/mastery accomplishments. Although this case study involved one middle college high school, the following section including the implications for practice in school systems, university

administrative preparation programs, and building level principals and teachers can impact decisions in both traditional and non-traditional educational environments.

School Systems

Due to the accountability expectations of the No Child Left Behind Act, greater awareness and attention has been given to the achievement gap and disparities among high school dropouts and postsecondary education with regards to race, especially in the southern region of the United States. High school reform efforts should be evaluated and examined by the affects it has on groups of students who have traditionally been underserved and low achieving. The development of middle college high schools in the 1970s aimed to provide students with a systemic transition program including a rigorous high school curriculum while providing a “seamless” transition into postsecondary educational opportunities within a college environment. Creating middle or early college high schools should be further explored within school systems as a possible option to better serve marginalized high school students as well as reexamining of the possible negative effects of comprehensive high schools on the academic and emotional development of its students.

University Administration Preparation Programs

The historical foundation and belief systems of the “sorting and selecting” comprehensive high school affects African-American students in a profound way, since it is the school structure that most African American students attend in this country. Research, such as the National Association of Secondary School Principal’s publication, *Breaking Ranks* (1996) speaks to the components that must be addressed for all students to thrive academically and emotionally in our high schools. Educators seeking to become

administrators and principals should be aware of effective school designs including caring and competent staff, to meet the variety of student needs to achieve educational success, especially underserved groups of students, such as African Americans and other minorities. These newly trained administrators should also be prepared to face possible resistance of the dominant culture wishing to maintain the status quo, and given leadership strategies to effectively communicate to stakeholders and lead public schools to better educate all groups of students, regardless of the individual and historically flawed perceptions of low achievement attributions.

School Administrators and Teachers

The African American student participants in this study were impacted by the school environment's ability to provide the "delicate balance" of support, resources, flexibility, and "personal space" to make decisions for themselves regarding their postsecondary plans. The perceptions of the young adults in this study regarding their freedom, flexibility, and support may need to be further explored in other traditional educational environments to promote a more "humane" learning environment while building the individual capacity within students to navigate through their life goals. The intent of many school reform efforts is to reduce the factors that may inhibit educational success while in school. A more challenging, but appropriate goal for our nation's high schools may be to not only develop a productive environment where students can succeed academically, but also help to build the individual capacity to seek out personal educational opportunities in the future, despite the various roadblocks along the journey. Educators that seek to satisfy acceptable graduation quotas and a decrease in the drop out rate for minority students will not have the same long term success as schools that strive

to provide learning environments where students are expected and supported to do well, feel cared for, while building the resiliency and efficacy skills necessary to practically actualize their goals and dreams.

Recommendations for Further Research

The perceptions of GTCC MCHS structure from 12 African American seniors regarding GTCC MCHS's impact on their academic achievement and motivation for educational success was the focus of this investigation. While this study only represents a very small portion of the educational experiences of African American students, it is the hope of the researcher that it contributes to the literature concerning the impact of high school structure on African American student academic achievement and motivation for educational success.

The five recommendations proposed by this researcher for further study are as follows:

1. A study including the voices of GTCC MCHS administrators, teachers, support staff, and GTCC liaisons could expand the understanding and intent of the impact of school structure on African American students.

2. A replication of this investigation to other middle college high schools within and outside of the Guilford school district, providing a springboard to a broader understanding of the impact of school structure on African American motivation and achievement at middle college high schools. Researchers should be cautious to make broad conclusions regarding student perceptions of school structure effectiveness across all middle college high schools.

3. A study that analyzes the student voice narratives in this study, as well as GTCC African American student achievement data through other theoretical frameworks, such as critical race theory, could provide a more in depth understanding of the impact of MCHS on African American achievement.

4. Replicate study with the other GTCC MCHS African American grade level students who would provide more insight into student perceptions of the impact of MCHS school structure. Such a study has significance due to the common successful experiences of the 12th graders examined in this study that are headed for graduation. The perceptions of students that have just begun the MCHS experience may provide insight on MCHS structure areas needed for improvement to increase academic motivation and achievement to complete high school and postsecondary planning.

5. A follow-up study involving the African American student participants in this study could examine the concrete impact of postsecondary educational pursuits and students' perception of the impact of the MCHS experience on their choices and actions steps toward their postsecondary goals.

The urgency of high school reform efforts are partly due to the growing awareness and concern of the racial disparities of achievement and graduation rates within high school students, due to the No Child Left Behind Act. It is essential that education researchers examine African American student perspectives on the school factors *they believe* positively impact or impede their school success. As new high school reform effort strategies continue to emerge in secondary education, such as smaller learning communities within the existing high school structure, and on campuses of higher learning such as middle and early college high schools, it is critical that

researchers choose to examine the success or failure of these efforts *beyond* grades, standardized test data, and attendance. It was evident from the student interviews that the overall quality of life, balance, feeling valued, and a positive social environment contributed a great deal to their academic success while in high school and motivation to achieve their postsecondary goals.

The impact of school structure on the 12th grade African American students participating in this study included varying degrees of impact regarding how students viewed themselves as high school students, college students, friends, parents, and their future selves. This researcher sincerely hopes that the recommendations in this study will inspire practitioners and policy makers to adhere to the voices of these students and what they perceive as factors contributing to their educational experiences at Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High School. It is also the researcher's hope that educators at various levels reflect on the goals and priorities of secondary education to prepare *all* high school students effectively with the skills necessary to appropriately approach, plan, and follow through with whatever their future goals may be, despite the range of adversity they may face while attempting to actualize their dreams.

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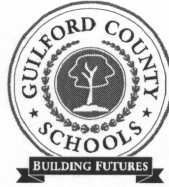
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APPENDIX A: GUILFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS RESEARCH REVIEW
COMMITTEE APPROVAL



Guilford County Schools
Office of Assessment & Evaluation

To: Lori M. Bruce

From: Sharon A. Johnson, Ph.D. saj
Executive Director Assessment & Evaluation

Date: November 21, 2005

Re: Research Proposal

Thank you for submitting your research proposal titled "*Perceptions, Motivations, and Achievement of African-American Students Attending a North Carolina Middle College High School.*" The Research Review Committee has concluded that your request does meet the criteria established under the current research policy of the Guilford County Schools. However, the school principal has the final decision regarding the participation of the school in any research program.

If you have any questions you may contact me at 370-8061. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

B u i l d i n g F u t u r e s

120 Franklin Boulevard Greensboro, NC 27401
Phone (336) 370-8061 Fax (336) 370-2340

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENTS



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

OFFICE OF HUMAN
RESEARCH ETHICS

BEHAVIORAL INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

BANK OF AMERICA BUILDING
SUITE 600
CAMPUS BOX 3378
CHAPEL HILL, NC 27599-3378

T 919.962.7761
F 919.843.5576
<http://ohre.unc.edu>

TO: *Lori Bruce*
DEPARTMENT: William Malloy
ADDRESS: School of Education-Administration
CB # 3500
Campus
DATE: 02/13/2006
FROM: Lawrence B. Rosenfeld
Behavioral Institutional Review Board
IRB NUMBER: EDUC 2005-061
APPROVAL PERIOD: 02/13/2006 through 02/12/2007
TITLE: Perceptions, Motivations, and Achievement of African-American Students Attending
a Middle College High School
SUBJECT: Expedited Protocol Approval Notice--New Protocol

The above research study has been reviewed and approved by the Behavioral IRB Co-Chair, on an Expedited basis, Category 7

☒ New approval ☐ Renewal approval ☐ Modification approval per 45 CFR 46 110(b)(2)
☐ Secondary data

Please note that, if checked, the following Federal regulations are applicable to this research study:

☒ 45 CFR 46.404 - The IRB finds that no greater than minimal risk to children is presented, and that adequate provisions have been made for soliciting the assent of the children and the permission of their parents or guardians, as set forth at 45 CFR 46.408.

☐ 45 CFR 46.116(d) - Approval of a consent procedure that does not include all of the elements of informed consent, or a waiver of the requirement to obtain informed consent has been satisfied.

☐ 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2) - Waiver of the requirement for documentation of written (signed) consent.

☐ 45 CFR 164.512 - Criteria for waiver of HIPAA Authorization have been satisfied.

☐ 45 CFR 164.508 - HIPAA Authorization Form approved.

The above Approval Period informs you of the date that IRB approval expires for this research study. You will be notified in advance of this date to submit an application for renewal or termination of IRB approval.

Please note that IRB approval is required prior to any modifications being made to this research study.

If you have any questions or concerns about your study's approval, please contact the Behavioral IRB Office at 962-7761 or e-mail the office at aa-irb-chair@unc.edu. Thank you.

Approved by:

Behavioral IRB Co-Chair
or Designee

2/13/06
Date of Approval

GTCC Middle College Students:


**Enter this drawing and be
eligible to win a \$25 Four
Seasons Mall gift
certificate today!**

**By entering the drawing, you may be
contacted to participate in a research
study involving a 1 hour interview about
your school experiences as a Middle
College High School student.**

***You do not have to participate in the study
to win the prize.***

SIGN UP NOW!

***Fill in the information on the ticket and
place inside the red box.***

APPROVED
Behavioral IRB, UNC-Chapel Hill
from 2/13/06 to 2/12/07


Name:
Age:
Grade:
Ethnicity/Race:
Number of Years attending GTCC MCHS:
Email Address:
Home Phone #
Cell Phone #
Address:
Name of your parent/guardian:

FREE DRAWING ENTRY TICKET

By entering the drawing, you may be contacted to participate in a research study involving a 1 hour interview about your school experiences as a Middle College High School student.

You do not have to participate in the study to win the prize.

APPROVED
Behavioral IRB, UNC-Chapel Hill
from 2/13/06 to 2/12/07

**Study Participation Interest
Phone Contact Script**

Date: December 11, 2005
IRB Application for: Lori M. Bruce
Dissertation Study: "Perceptions, Motivations, and Achievement of African-American Students Attending a Middle College High School"

Researcher: "Hello, may I speak with _____ *Student meeting research criteria?*"

Researcher: "My name is Lori Bruce, and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am contacting you today to possibly participate in my dissertation research study. Do you have a few minutes to talk about the study?"


Student: "No"

Researcher: "Okay, I understand. I will mail and email you with all of study information. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time."

OR

Student: "Yes"

Researcher: "Thank you! The title of my dissertation study is Perceptions, Motivations, and Achievement of African-American Students Attending a Middle College High School. There will be 10 students attending The Middle College at GTCC participating in this study. Basically, the goal of my study is to examine the educational experiences of ten 12th grade African-American students enrolled at Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) Middle College High School (MCHS). Guilford Technical Community College MCHS was one of the first Middle College High Schools that opened in Guilford County and in the entire state of North Carolina. Your educational experiences of is valuable information to policymakers, school district leaders, and principals to help design more effective high schools and provide better services to students while in high school and preparation for educational success after graduation. The perspectives and academic progress of African-American High School student is especially needed, due to the racial achievement gap, and the need for improved graduation rates and lower dropout rates among African- American students. If you would like to participate in the study, I will need you and your parent's permission. This study has already been approved from the Guilford County Schools Research Review Committee and Mr. Watlington, Principal of GTCC MCHS. I will be sending you information about this study by letter and email including the Student Assent Form and a Parent Consent Form. Do you have any questions for me at this time? (answer any questions) Once you have received my information about possibly participating in the study, please give me a call or send an email with your questions. My contact information is on the permission forms. Thank you for your time."

APPROVED
Behavioral IRB, UNC-Chapel Hill
from 2/12/06 to 2/12/07


APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVED PARENT CONSENT FORMS

**University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Parental Permission for a Minor Child to Participate in a Research Study
Social Behavioral Form**

IRB # EDUC 05-061

Consent Form Version Date: 02/12/06

Title of Study: Perceptions, Motivations, and Achievement of African-American students
Attending a Middle College High School

Principal Investigator: Lori M. Bruce
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: Doctoral Student, Education Leadership
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-475-9705 (cell#)
Email Address: lmbruce@email.unc.edu

Faculty Advisor: Dr. William Malloy
Professor, Education Leadership
919-962-2610
wmalloy@email.unc.edu

Study Contact telephone number: 919-475-9705 (cell#)
Study Contact email: lmbruce@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to allow your child to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to give permission, or you may withdraw your permission for your child to be in the study, for any reason. Even if you give your permission, your child can decide not to be in the study or to leave the study early.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. Your child may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you and your child can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this permission form. You and your child should ask Lori Bruce, Dr. William Malloy, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of the study is to examine the educational experiences of ten 12th grade African-American students enrolled at Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) Middle College High School (MCHS). GTCC MCHS was one of the first Middle College High Schools that opened in Guilford County and in the entire state of North Carolina.

In 2003, the Governor's Office in North Carolina secured an \$11 million grant to redesign and create over 40 new high schools funded primarily by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as well as other private businesses, government institutions, and various foundations, named the "New Schools Project." In 2004, The North Carolina General Assembly launched another phase, called the "Learn and Earn" program to create more early college high school partnerships with private and public colleges and universities, and community colleges.

The educational experiences of your child is valuable information to policymakers, school district leaders, and principals to help design more effective high schools and provide better services to students while in high school and preparation for educational success after graduation. The perspectives and academic progress of African-American High School students is especially needed, due to the racial achievement gap, and the need for improved graduation rates and lower dropout rates among African- American students.

This study has already been approved from the Guilford County Schools Research Review Committee and Mr. Watlington, Principal of GTCC MCHS. Your child is being asked to be in the study because he/she is classified as a 12th grade African-American student attending Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High School.

How many people will take part in this study?

If your child is in this study, your child will be one of 10 students in this research study.

How long will your child's part in this study last?

If your child participates in this study, they will answer 14 student interview questions that will last approximately one hour. The student interview will take place at school during non-instructional class time in a private office or classroom. If more time is needed to answer all of the questions, an additional 30 minute interview will be scheduled if your child chooses to continue participation.

What will happen if your child takes part in the study?

If your child participates in this study, an interview time will be scheduled in February 2006. The research project will be explained to your child and he/she will answer student interview questions only if he/she is willing to do so. Participation in this study is voluntary. At any time during this interview, your child may refuse to answer interview questions, refuse the review of his/her school records, or withdraw from the participation of this research project for any reason whatsoever. Your child may also refuse to answer any particular questions he/she is asked. Participating students will be given a \$25 gift certificate to the Four Seasons Mall as appreciation from Ms. Bruce for his/her time and valuable contribution to this research. If your child begins the student interview, but decides to end his/her participation in the study, *your child will still receive the \$25 gift certificate.*

- All interviews will be conducted by me and are expected to last approximately 1 hour. If more time is needed to answer all of the questions, an additional 30 minute interview will be scheduled. If additional interview time is needed, by signing this parent consent form, you are giving permission for your child to schedule additional time with Ms. Bruce only if your child agrees to continue the interview. The interview sessions will be audio-taped. **In addition to your child's participation in the interview, I will need to review some of your child's school records.** These records include: Application to GTCC

MCHS, including letters of recommendation and essay, transcript information including attendance, course selection, and grades, discipline referrals, standardized test data such as End of Grade tests, SAT, and ASSET scores, and any other information which will help determine the educational progress of your child. If you give permission, Mr. Watlington will give me copies of your child's information located in his/her school file. During the interview process and student records data collection, your child's information will be kept in a locked office and a password protected database. Pseudonyms for participating students will be used to protect participant confidentiality. At the conclusion of the research project, I will destroy all notes and responses provided by your child. Anonymity of all responses will be protected by Ms. Bruce.

- As parent/guardian, you have a right to review the interview questions that will be asked of your child. You may obtain these questions from the principal or contact me directly.
- At the conclusion of the research project, a summary of results will be made available to all interested parents and school faculty. Should you have any questions or want to request further information, please contact me at (919)475-9705, email me at lmbruce@email.unc.edu, or you may contact Dr. William Malloy, Faculty Advisor, at (919)962-2510, or email him at wmalloy@email.unc.edu.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. Students will not benefit personally from being in this research study. Your child may enjoy being in this study by sharing valuable information to policymakers, school district leaders, and principals to help design more effective high schools. Your child may also enjoy contributing to a study that may help provide better services for students during high school and preparation for success after graduation. The perspectives and academic progress of African-American High School students is especially important, due to the racial achievement gap, and the need for improved graduation rates and lower dropout rates among African- American students.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

Student interviews will be conducted in a quiet, private location during non-instructional class time. Due to small number of students that attend GTCC MCHS (150), it is possible that readers of the final dissertation may be able to infer who the 10 African-American seniors were that participated in the study and it is possible that certain responses could be linked to the individual students. Pseudonyms for participating students will be used to protect participant confidentiality as much as possible. There are no known risks to student participants. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to Lori Bruce.

How will your child's privacy be protected?

Student interviews will be audio-taped then transcribed into a written document. If your child does not want to be audio-taped at any time during the interview, Ms. Bruce will turn off the recorder and continue the interview while taking written notes. Anonymity of all responses will be protected by Ms. Bruce. Pseudonyms for participating students will be used to protect participant confidentiality.

The audio cassette tapes, written transcriptions, student interview notes, and school records provided by the principal will be kept in a locked office and in a password protected database

until the end of the research study/approval of the dissertation. Lori Bruce and Dr. William Malloy will be the only persons that will see your child's information. At the conclusion of the research project, Ms. Bruce will destroy all notes and responses provided by your child and his/her school records information.

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your child's information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Will your child receive anything for being in this study?

Your child will be receiving a \$25 gift certificate to the Four Seasons Mall for taking part in this study. If your child begins the student interview, but decides to end his/her participation in the study, *your child will still receive the \$25 gift certificate.*

Will it cost you anything for your child to be in this study?

There will be no costs for being in the study.

What if you are a UNC employee?

Your child's taking part in this research is not a part of your University duties, and refusing to give permission will not affect your job. You will not be offered or receive any special job-related consideration if your child takes part in this research.

What if you or your child has questions about this study?

You and your child have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact Lori Bruce listed on the first page of this form.

What if you or your child has questions about your child's rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your child's rights and welfare. If you or your child has questions or concerns about your child's rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Parent's Agreement:


I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily give permission to allow my child to participate in this research study.

Printed Name of Research Participant (Child)

Signature of Parent

Date

Printed Name of Parent

APPROVED
Behavioral IRB, UNC-Chapel Hill
from 2/13/06 to 2/18/07


APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVED STUDENT ASSENT FORMS

**University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Assent to Participate in a Research Study
Adolescent Participants age 15-17
Social Behavioral Form**

IRB # EDUC 05-061

Assent Form Version Date: 02/12/06

Title of Study: Perceptions, Motivations, and Achievement of African-American students
Attending a Middle College High School

Principal Investigator: Lori M. Bruce
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: Doctoral Student, Education Leadership
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-475-9705 (cell#)
Email Address: lmbruce@email.unc.edu

Faculty Advisor: Dr. William Malloy
Professor, Education Leadership
919-962-2610
wmalloy@email.unc.edu

Study Contact telephone number: 919-475-9705 (cell#)
Study Contact email: lmbruce@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to, even if your parent has already given permission. If you decide to stop, no one will be angry or upset with you. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask Lori Bruce, Dr. William Malloy, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of the study is to examine the educational experiences of ten 12th grade African-American students enrolled at Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) Middle College High School (MCHS). GTCC MCHS was one of the first Middle College High Schools that opened in Guilford County and in the entire state of North Carolina.

Your educational experiences are valuable information to policymakers, school district leaders, and principals. Your insight will help educators provide better services to high school students during and after graduation. The perspectives and academic progress of African-American High School students is especially needed, due to the racial achievement gap, and the need for improved graduation rates and lower dropout rates among African- American students.

This study has already been approved from the Guilford County Schools Research Review Committee and Mr. Watlington, Principal of GTCC MCHS. You are being asked to be in the study because you are classified as a 12th grade African-American student attending Guilford Technical Community College Middle College High School.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of 10 students in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?

If you participate in this study, you will answer 14 student interview questions that will last approximately one hour. The student interview will take place at school during non-instructional class time in a private office or classroom. If more time is needed to answer all of the questions, an additional 30 minute interview will be scheduled if you choose to continue participation.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you participate in this study, an interview time will be scheduled in February 2006. The research project will be explained, and you will answer student interview questions only if you are willing to do so. Participation in this study is voluntary. At any time during this interview, you may refuse to answer interview questions, refuse the review of your school records, or withdraw from the participation of this research project for any reason whatsoever. You may also refuse to answer any particular question asked during the interview. Participating students will be given a \$25 gift certificate to the Four Seasons Mall as appreciation from Ms. Bruce for your time and valuable contribution to this research. If you begin the student interview, but decide to end your participation in the study for any reason, *you will still receive the \$25 gift certificate.*

All interviews will be conducted by Lori Bruce and are expected to last approximately 1 hour. If more time is needed to answer all of the questions, an additional 30 minute interview will be scheduled if you choose to continue participation. The interview sessions will be audio-taped. In addition to your participation in the interview, I will need to review some of your school records. These records include: Application to GTCC MCHS, including letters of recommendation and essay, transcript information including attendance, course selection, and grades, discipline referrals, standardized test data such as End of Grade tests, SAT, and ASSET scores, and any other information which will help determine your educational progress. If you give permission, Mr. Watlington will give me copies of your information located in your school file. During the interview process and school records data collection, your student information will be kept in a locked office and a password protected database. Pseudonyms for participating students will be used to protect participant confidentiality. At the conclusion of the research project, Ms. Bruce will destroy all notes and responses provided by you. Anonymity of all responses will be protected by Ms. Bruce.

At the conclusion of the research project, a summary of results will be made available to all interested parents and school faculty. Should you have any questions or want to request further information, please contact me at (919)475-9705, email me at lbruce@email.unc.edu, or you may contact Dr. William Malloy, Faculty Advisor, at (919)962-2510, or email him at wmalloy@email.unc.edu.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You will not benefit personally from being in this research study. You may enjoy being in this study by sharing valuable information to policymakers, school district leaders, and principals to help design more effective high schools and provide better services to students while in high school and preparation for educational success after graduation. The perspectives and academic progress of African-American High School student is especially important, due to the racial achievement gap, and the need for improved graduation rates and lower dropout rates among African-American students.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

Student interviews will be conducted in a quiet, private location during non-instructional class time. Due to the small number of students that attend GTCC MCHS (150), it is possible that readers of the final dissertation may be able to infer who the 10 African-American seniors were who participated in the study and it is possible that certain responses could be linked to the individual students. Pseudonyms for participating students will be used to protect participant confidentiality as much as possible. There are no known risks to student participants. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to Lori Bruce.

How will your privacy be protected?

Student interviews will be audio-taped then transcribed into a written document. If you do not want to be audio-taped at any time during the interview, Ms. Bruce will turn off the recorder and continue the interview while taking written notes. Anonymity of all responses will be protected by Ms. Bruce. Pseudonyms for participating students will be used to protect participant confidentiality.

The audio cassette tapes, written transcriptions, student interview notes, and school records provided by the principal will be kept in a locked office and in a password protected database until the end of the research study/approval of the dissertation. Ms. Bruce and faculty advisory will be the only persons that will see your information. At the conclusion of the research project, Ms. Bruce will destroy all notes and responses provided by you and your school records information.

You will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will receive a \$25 gift certificate to the Four Seasons Mall for taking part in this study. If you begin the student interview, but decide to end participation in the study, *you will still receive the \$25 gift certificate.*

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact Lori Bruce or Dr. William Malloy listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Your signature if you agree to be in the study


Date

Printed name if you agree to be in the study

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Assent

APPROVED
Behavioral IRB, UNC-Chapel Hill
from 2/12/06 to 2/12/07


APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Conversational Guide Student Interview Protocol

You are being asked to take part in a research study. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to, even if you and your parents have already given permission. If you decide to stop, no one will be angry or upset with you. You may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty. Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefits from being in this research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. The purpose of this study is to examine the educational experiences of African-American students that attend GTCC MCHS. Your educational experiences are valuable information to policymakers, school district leaders, and principals. Your insight will help educators provide better services to high school students during and after graduation. The perspectives and academic progress of African-American high school students is especially needed, due to the racial achievement gap, and the need for improved graduation rates and lower dropout rates among African-American students. Student interviews will be audio-taped then transcribed into a written document. If you do not want to be audio-taped at any time during the interview, I will turn off the recorder and continue the interview while taking notes. If you agree to proceed with the interview, I will ask you to provide a pseudonym (or a different name), this is to protect your identity. Do you have any questions? What name would you like to use as a pseudonym?

RAPPORT BUILDING QUESTIONS:

- *Are you from Guilford County?*
- *When will you graduate?*

MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. Tell me about the first year you attended GTCC MCHS.

(Follow-up questions)

- a. ***How did you learn about GTCC MCHS?*** (possible probing questions: *what made you decide to investigate, apply, and enroll?*)
- b. ***How did the adults in your life feel about you enrolling at GTCC MCHS?*** (possible probing questions – family? Teachers? Counselor?)
- c. ***How did you feel about being in the same educational environment as older adults and college students?*** (possible probing questions regarding their feelings)

2. Tell me about your friends at MCHS.

(Follow-up questions)

- a. ***Where did you meet them?***(possible probing questions: *What kind of social activities are at the school? Are your friends similar or different from old high school? Cliques/groups at GTCC? Extra curricular activities?*)
- b. ***Are their goals similar or different from yours?***

(possible probing questions: post secondary options? GTCC? 4-year university? local? profession?)

3. Tell me about your classes, homework, and grades.

(Follow-up questions)

- a. **What classes are you in right now?** *(possible probing questions: college courses? high school courses? Specific grades in classes?)*
- b. **What is your attendance like?** *(possible probing questions: better, same, or worse than former high school? What happens when you miss too many days?)*
- c. **What was your most challenging course last semester?** *(possible probing questions: Can you give me an example? Did you receive extra help from school? Describe the type of help you received from school.)*
- d. **What was the best thing that happened to you at school last week?** *(possible probing questions: Best thing in your classes? Best thing socially?)*

4. How do you think your teachers view you?

(Possible Follow-up questions)

- a. *How do they view you as a student? (possible probing question: view as a person?)*
- b. *Do you feel that you can talk to teachers/staff when you have a problem? (possible probing questions: Academic problem? Personal problem? Can you give me an example?)*
- c. *How do you think your classmates view you? (possible probing question: as a person? As a student?)*

5. Tell me about your plans after high school.

(Possible Follow-up questions)

- a. *What professional goals do you have? (possible probing: what kind of preparation do you need to go into that field?)*
- b. *What educational goals do you have once you graduate from high school? (possible probing: What college/university/community college? What do you plan to study? What do you need to do in order to go to that school? What steps have you taken already to attend?)*
- c. *Did you receive any help from GTCC MCHS staff? (possible probing: chosen profession? College or university choice? SAT or ASSET preparation? Application process?)*

CLOSING QUESTIONS: *(if time permits)*

- *What would you say to an African-American student that was thinking about applying to GTCC MCHS?*
- *Is there anything else you would like to tell me regarding your experiences at GTCC MCHS?*

APPENDIX F: STUDENT APPLICATION FOR MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL
AT GTCC

EARLY/ MIDDLE COLLEGE AT GTCC
GUILFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS

*Attach Transcript

APPLICATION FOR EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE AT GTCC
2005-2006 SCHOOL YEAR

Application period is February 1 - March 24, 2005

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION BY PRINTING IN INK.

Name of student _____ Sex _____ Race _____

Age _____ Date of Birth _____ Social Security number _____

Name(s) of Parent/Legal Guardian _____

Home address _____

(Street)

(City)

(State)

(Zip)

Parent e-mail address _____

Residence phone _____ Business phone (m) _____ (f) _____

School assignment (by high school attendance zone) _____

School presently attending _____ Grade _____

Expected grade level for 2005-2006 _____

Does the student currently receive special education services? _____ If so, what category? _____

Do you currently have another student enrolled in the Early/Middle College at GTCC program? _____

If so, student name _____ Student's current grade _____

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY: By submitting this application you understand the commitment of effort and time your child is undertaking if accepted into the Early/Middle College at GTCC. This commitment includes agreeing to keep your child in the Program for at least one semester. Further, you will be required to request reassignment at the end of each year for as long as your child is enrolled in the program. If at the end of any high school year your child is unwilling or unable to continue studies in the Early/Middle College at GTCC, she/he will be reassigned to the high school of her/his attendance zone. Also, any attendance or behavior problems will be sufficient cause to rescind any reassignment that may be granted.

(Parent/Guardian signature) _____ Date _____

Please return this application and transcript no later than March 24, 2005 to:

Tony Watlington, Principal
Early/Middle College at GTCC
601 High Point Road
Jamestown, NC 27282
(336) 819-2957

.....
For office use only: ☐ Student is recommended for the Early/Middle College at GTCC. Grade Level _____
 ☐ Student is # _____ on a waiting list for the Early/Middle College at GTCC
 ☐ Student is not eligible for the Early/Middle College at GTCC
 Reason for ineligibility _____

Signature of Early/Middle College at GTCC Principal _____ Date _____

(Once signed, Principal should make copy and send original to Student Assignment Office, 120 Franklin Blvd.)

Guilford County Schools
2005-2008 School Improvement Plan
The Middle College at GTCC

Approvals

Approved by Staff:

Date of Approval by Staff: 10-5-05

Principal's Signature: On File

Results (% Approval): 100%

Date: 10-5-05

Approved By Division of Academic Improvement

Instructional Improvement Officer's

Signature: On File

Date: _____

Approved by GCS Board of Education

Date: _____

Date Revised: 9/2/05

Principal's Signature: On File

Instructional Improvement Officer's Signature: On File

DAI-F005 Created May, 2005

Goals, Strategies, Monitoring and Budget

2: Culture for Learning

Goal(s):

1. To provide a safe, orderly, and inviting learning environment with support systems that help each student perform to his/her potential.
2. To provide a nurturing environment where each staff member will develop positive personal relationships with each student.

Objective(s):

1. There will be no more than 4 suspensions during the 2005-2006 school year.
2. Students will receive documented counseling support to help deal with a variety of academic and social issues.
3. Students (who come from all 14 traditional high schools) will participate in a variety of activities to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and to improve teamwork skills.
4. Daily student attendance will increase to 92 percent as evidenced by the SIMS attendance report.

ACTION PLAN

Data (Related to Stated Goal)	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007		2007-2008	
	Results	Target	Results	Target	Results	Target	Results	Target
Attendance Rate	91%	92%						
Out-of-School Suspensions (Total)	1	4						
In-School Suspensions (Total)	0	0						
Retentions	0	0						
Early Leavers (High School)	12	6						

DAI-F005 Created May 2005

The Middle College at GTCC

School-Community Profile

The Middle College at Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) was the first Middle College High School in the state of North Carolina and is entering its fifth year. GTCC Middle College began in 2001-2002 and has an outstanding track record of impressive accomplishments. The school was created to address the needs of students who are capable, but who did not fit into the traditional high school environment. The target population includes students who may fall under the following categories: dropped out or considering dropping out of school, abuse, dysfunctional families, isolated within the school population, runaways, or some type of instability in their lives that makes completing traditional high school unlikely.

The Middle College at GTCC is a school, not a program. It is organized and staffed to help students address their problems and to help get students back on an academic track and prepare them for graduation and continued life-long learning.

Average class size is 15 students per class and the small school of 135 students is served by a full time guidance counselor and principal. Teachers at the school have been described as "caring, second chance" teachers. The school draws its culture that of the host college. In short order, students begin acting like and thinking of themselves as "college" students. The students follow the rules and regulations of the college. Rules are few, and the responsibility for self-control is great. During the past school year no fights were reported by the school, and only two students were suspended from school. Approximately 30 percent of the students took college courses for dual high school and college credit, earning a 3.0 Grade Point Average.

Because of high success in previous years, the school was selected as a "Learn and Earn" middle college high school during the 2004-05 school year. The school was selected as pilot acceleration site for the governor's new Learn and Earn initiative. The specific Learn and Earn goals are to:

- Continue the process of designing curriculum and support structures that ensure the attainment of an associate's degree and/or two years of transferable college credit at no cost to the student;
- Develop a plan to serve a diverse population of 135 students in terms of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, academic ability, achievement, and motivation (comparable to district level demographics);
- Incorporate work based learning experiences and internships for every student;
- Design and implement affective and academic systems of support to help students attain the high expectations presented by the early college model;

DAI-F005 Created May 2005

- Partner with middle schools to prepare rising freshmen for the early college experience.

It is the expectation that the Middle College will serve as one of five innovative smaller high school models across the state of North Carolina. The principal and faculty recognize the need to both strengthen the parent boosters organization and to recruit aggressively in order to continue to diversify the student body.

Goals, Strategies, Monitoring and Budget

3: Community Involvement

Goal(s): To increase involvement of all school stakeholders (students, parents, college community, school staff, and broader community) in school-based decisions to improve student performance and attendance.

Objectives:

1. Strengthen partnership between Guilford County Schools and Guilford Technical Community College via monthly High School Innovation Leadership Team meetings (principal, IIO, college liaison, guidance counselor, career counselor, New Schools Project coach)
2. Increase school-parent communication by bi-monthly use of Connect Ed phone system.
3. Increase opportunities for parental involvement through regular attendance at monthly parent booster meetings.
4. Increase communication between college and school faculties by allowing time for group dialogue on each faculty meeting agenda.
5. Convene ongoing parent conferences to discuss student attendance and performance (documented in principal's and teacher's parent contact log)
6. Maintain high levels of faculty voice in decision making by following the "Democratic School Governance" design principle (measured by end-of-year faculty survey)

ACTION PLAN

Data (Related to Stated Goal)	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007		2007-2008	
	Results	Target	Results	Target	Results	Target	Results	Target
Volunteers (hours)	10	25						
Opportunities for Parental Dialogue/Participation	12	24						
Parent-teacher-Student conferences	85	135						
Attendance at monthly parent booster meetings	20 avg	50 avg						
Home visits/phone calls	150	300						

DAI-F005 Created May, 2005

The Middle College at GTCC

SAT PLAN

Comments: The Middle College at GTCC has a two year associates degree component under the Governor's Learn and Earn initiative. The initiative requires students in grades 9 and 10 complete a two year associates degree program and a high school diploma in four years (with a fifth year option for some students). Some Middle College students are not required to complete a degree but the school has set a goal of all upper classmen students to take at least one college course each semester. Because the only prerequisite for admission to college courses is a passing score on the college placement test (or Asset test), students generally do not have high motivation levels to take or to score well on the SAT test. This and the fact that many students do not initially view themselves as "college material" require the school to employ three key strategies to increase SAT participation rates and SAT scores. The three strategies are printed below:

DAI-F005 Created May 2005