

ASSESSMENT AND ASSIMILATION: A PROGRAM FOR SCHOOLS
CHALLENGED WITH MOBILITY

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ABSTRACT

Student mobility is the process of describing how children move from one school to another for reasons other than promotion. Highly mobile students are defined as students who move six or more times during their school career. Schools that experience the constant flow of students moving in and out struggle with delivering consistent and effective instruction for both the stable and the highly mobile student.

The effects that highly mobile students have on academic achievement and accountability have failed to be addressed by education reform initiatives. The results of student mobility continue to go unnoticed and remain a serious problem that impacts all aspects of education reform, contributing to the gap in achievement between the advantaged and disadvantaged.

This dissertation examined the effectiveness of the Assessment and Assimilation Program, which was designed to support highly mobile students entering Best Middle School. In the study, student data from Best's highly mobile students (transcripts, discipline reports, and attendance reports) were used to measure the relationship between academic achievement (improved grades), attendance (increased time in school), and discipline (decrease in negative referrals) after attending Assessment and Assimilation at Best Middle School.

DEDICATION

To John, my husband, mentor, protector, friend, and lover, there are no words that could possibly describe how grateful I am for your patience and understanding. This is not a place I would have traveled to if you had not entered my life. I thank God everyday for choosing me to be with you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A young girl of 12 comes home on her last day of school in the seventh grade to find a “For Sale” sign in her front yard. She races into the house yelling for an explanation and dissolves into a mass of tears as she sits on the floor. Her mother comes into the room explaining that they have no choice; her father has been laid off, again.

It is not as it used to be, when dad took a job and became a “company man” until he retired. In those days, families knew that when they moved into a home they were there to stay. You knew your neighbors, your kids went to the neighborhood schools and grew up forming lifelong friendships, and when a new family moved into the neighborhood, which did not happen often, they were welcomed like long lost relatives.

Background

More than ever people are on the move. Limited financial resources, loss of job, home, and relationship problems are just some of the reasons parents or guardians pull their children out of school. Kerbow (1995) stated, “Student movement penetrates the essential activity of schools, the interaction of teachers and students around learning” (p. 147).

As a result, many children are placed in a situation that requires adjusting to a new way of life, a new place, new rules, and a new school curriculum (Engec, 2006). This creates hardships for children who oftentimes find moving emotionally or educationally traumatic. As part of the Kids Mobility Project, conducted by the University of Minneapolis in 1998, the

Hennepin County Office of Planning and Development did a quantitative analysis of the Minneapolis Public Schools' student data. Researchers asked the question: Does changing homes and/or schools have a significant impact on student achievement?

Defining student mobility as the process of moving from one school to another for reasons other than promotion and defining highly mobile students as students who move six or more times during their school career, student mobility in elementary schools was tracked from November 1994 to June 1995. Demographic questions, such as "Who moved?" "From where?" and "To where?" were reviewed along with student achievement data. Researchers stressed that the study results may understate actual mobility because it covers only six and a half months and because not all address changes are reported to schools staff. Even so, the results were startling: during the six and a half months of research, 21% of the subjects in the analysis moved into or changed addresses within the district, while 8.5% moved away.

Transfers after official start dates accounted for half of the mobile students who moved or stayed in the district. Overall, one in three students in the sample was born in other states, or countries. Shockingly, nearly one in three African American, Hispanic, and American Indian students moved at least once; one in six Asian students moved at least once; and one in 17 White students moved at least once.

One in four low-income students moved one or more times during the study compared to one in 10 students who did not qualify for the free lunch program. Two of the three students who were born in other states or countries and moved were low income. Lastly, one out of three students not living with both parents moved, in contrast to one in 10 students from traditional families. Inevitably, we must question whether moving causes poor performance, what role

school attendance plays, or whether there is a connection between moving and factors such as poverty and family structure.

Student mobility varies by race, ethnicity, and family income. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Mobility Study performed in 1998 showed that 41% of Hispanic American and 45% of Black fourth-grade students changed schools between 1996 and 1998, compared to 27% of White and 33% of Asian American fourth-grade students and it also revealed that 43% of fourth-grade students who are eligible for the national school lunch program (i.e., low-income students) changed schools during 1996-1998, compared to 26% who were not eligible (U. S. Department of Commerce, 2002).

Just as student mobility varies among students, it also varies among schools. A survey conducted by 50 Local Education Agencies (LEA) across the United States revealed that in many districts the proportion of students enrolled in a school for less than the entire academic year often exceeds 40% and is especially high within large, predominantly minority, urban school districts (Ligon & Paredes, 1992). Another example is the Los Angeles Unified School district, which has a turnover rate (the proportion of students who enters after school starts will leave before school ends) across the district that exceeded 40% in the 1990-1991 school year (Rumberger, 2003).

The variations of mobility issues from school to school are staggering, with mobility rates that range from 5% to 60% (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). For example, 80% of the students in the Chicago Public School System remained in the same school from September 1993 to September 1994; however, only 47% of them remained in the same school over a four-year period (Bryk, Thum, Easton, & Luppescu, 1998). In addition, 15% of the schools in Chicago lose at least 30% of their students from one year to the next; while only 15% of the schools retain

more than 85% of their students in the same period (Kerbow, 1995). Finally, both urban and suburban schools are equally affected by mobility. In 2000 Rumberger and Thomas conducted a study of 247 urban and suburban U.S. high schools and found that, on average, 22% of the 10th-grade students left before completing 12th grade in both urban and suburban schools.

Additionally, students face gaps in learning, which present academic challenges for teachers and schools. For example, schools located in areas of high mobility find that many times new students come with learning gaps that can range from a few months to several years (Paik & Phillips, 2002).

Because state standards largely mandate the content of the curriculum, students who move from one state to another find themselves behind or in front of their new classmates. Another difficult situation the school experiences is lack of records that are necessary for proper placement of the mobile student. The information that comes with the student, if any, is typically vague and difficult to decipher (Sanderson, 2003). Therefore, students are often forced into classes to learn content they have already mastered, or have never seen, creating learning difficulties and behavior problems.

A school that suffers from highly mobile students suffers from school budget and funding issues. Whether the district is large or small, schools with highly mobile populations require an abundance of added resources. Highly mobile students are caught in a net of social and economic causes that initiate frequent movement. Some students move feeling overwhelmed with negative thoughts and emotions, which if not addressed may well result in poor attitudes, decreased school performance, and weak attendance rates.

When a student changes schools due to promotion, it is expected and viewed as “normal movement.” The student is prepared emotionally for the move and because the student moves with friends, their social network remains intact. However,

when a trusting and valued relationship with teachers, peers, or extended family is torn apart with an unexpected move it becomes a stressful situation for the child, as intense as the hospitalization of a parent for a serious illness, and/or having a parent in jail for 30 days or less. (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1996, p. 5)

In addition, student mobility has been directly related to high numbers of absences. A student’s educational development is dependent on regular attendance; without the continuity of instruction, the student may fail to make the curriculum connection. Falling further behind with each move, by the student’s 16th birthday, the school is history (Walls, 2003).

Jobs, finances, divorce, homelessness, and poverty are some of the reasons studies show for the dramatic increase in student mobility across the United States. Highly mobile students, students who move and change schools six or more times during their educational career, are being set up for failure (Popp, 2004). Not only do the mobile students experience the negative effects of moving during the school year, or at the beginning of each year, so do the teachers, school, and non-mobile students. If school districts do not start dealing with the issue of student mobility successfully, the psychological and social impacts may be devastating (Hall, 2001).

Student movement from school to school is a widespread problem across the country. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2001), between 1999-2000 nearly 12 million children changed residences, and of that 12 million 41% of those children were low achieving students. Attendance issues due to enrollment and transportation problems provide excuses for some students to wait days, weeks, or months before starting in their new school, thus creating significant gaps in the academic process. Students miss valuable steps that are necessary for building the academic knowledge necessary to advance in their educational careers (Hall, 2001).

Records get lost, misplaced, or brushed aside leaving the new school no choice but to make placement decisions based on vague information given by parents, guardians, or the student (Ascher, 1991). Highly mobile students rarely are given an opportunity to form lasting friendships with peers and trusting relationships with teachers. Some students become withdrawn, while others become loud and difficult, demanding attention from anyone. Teachers are placed in the difficult position of having to stop, back up, and review, giving non-mobile students no choice but to review again.

Finally, schools with a majority of highly mobile students can be devastated by their lack of academic performance (Williams, 2003). Students who suffer from high mobility primarily live an impoverished life; many are homeless or victims of domestic violence. Others are part of migrant families that move with seasonal work. These highly mobile students struggle to recover academically, emotionally, and socially and the heat is placed on the districts, schools, and teachers to insure these students “pass the test.”

The penalties that go along with high mobility are severe. Highly mobile students typically take between four to six months, but often longer, to recover academically after a transfer, and, according to research, are half as likely to graduate from high school as their stable peers (Walls, 2003). In most cases, highly mobile students experience relationship problems, becoming isolated or aggressive after a move. This contributes to poor grades and poor academic performance. With an average score 20 points lower on standardized test than non-mobile students, the highly mobile student is twice as likely to fail one or more grades (Minneapolis Public Schools, Hennepin County, University of Minnesota: CURA and CAREI, and the Family Housing Fund, 1998). In summary, the negative impact of mobility on the academic achievement of stable students is simply impossible to ignore (Williams, 2003).

In some areas of the country, student mobility has become commonplace, with faculty and staff members already accustomed to the “revolving door” feel of their school. Looking at the statistics on mobility and knowing the negative consequences that come with being a mobile school, it is surprising that districts and schools have not put measures in place to support students as they transition into and out of school. Research does show that a small number of highly mobile districts and schools have implemented various forms of support to assist their incoming and outgoing mobile students. However, neither schools, communities, states, nor the federal government have adequately addressed the issue of providing effective schooling for mobile students. In addition, the various programs and policies handed down by the government have done little to deal with the social and educational issues brought about by mobility (Hartman, 2003).

Education reform put forward, i.e. smaller class size, smaller schools, lower teacher/student ratios, highly qualified teachers, improved facilities, increased emphasis on testing and accountability, are all seriously undermined, if not irrelevant, if the classroom is a revolving door. (There is however, some evidence that recognizing the challenges faced by these children and families and creating a more supportive school environment can reduce some types of classroom turnover). (Hartman, 2003, p. 1)

While there is a significant amount of research indicating mobility directly affects academic achievement, some find mobility to be a complicating factor for a child with other “at-risk” issues. In a 1980 position paper, The National Education Association declared that mobility alone was not the problem: “The problem is that the system lacks the readiness and capability to deal with mobility” (n.p.). Buerkel and Christenson (1999) claimed we are wrong to assume there is a “direct and explicitly negative relationship between mobility and effects between children and families” (p. 11). They encouraged researchers to look closer at the reasons for the move and at their research question, suggesting they ask, “Which aspects of mobility affect

student achievement?,' instead of, 'What is the effect of student mobility on achievement?'" (Buerkle & Christenson, 1999, p. 12).

Buerkle and Christenson's (1999) work supports findings in the research literature. Bayer (1982), Newman (1988), the National Institute of Education (1988), and Kirkpatrick and Lash (1990) suggested mobility alone does not result in poor academic achievement, poor behavior, or non-attendance. Buerkle and Christenson (1999) suggested that further research examining the effects of mobility with a multi-dimensional framework should be conducted.

Student mobility is a complex issue. The concept represents a series of procedures and changes that may have numerous and complex effects that vary from child to child (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2010). Buerkle and Christenson (1999) explained that from a philosophical standpoint, mobility is diverse and complex, influenced by many factors, and there is a tendency to over simplify its impact. However, a review of literature in the area of student mobility documents and supports the findings of significant relationships between mobility and low academic achievement, problem behaviors, and poor school attendance issues (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2010).

The long-term effects and pervasiveness of mobility underscore the need to (a) Continue research on effective strategies and underlying causes, and (b) Require that school systems develop strategies and policies to improve school stability and support mobile students. Addressing mobility issues in a comprehensive manner can result in an improved school environment, better student engagement and parent involvement, increased average daily attendance, and student achievement, and high school completion rates. (American Youth Policy Forum, 2002, p. 1, para. 2)

Purpose Statement

The Assessment and Assimilation Program is an intervention tool designed for K-12 schools that experience highly mobile students. The goal of the Assessment and Assimilation

Program is to build a trusting relationship with new students and their families, while continuing to recognize, respect, and address the students' needs. This is accomplished by providing immediate support for the new student and the student's family and by embracing a philosophy of partnership between the student, family, and educators.

In addition, the Assessment and Assimilation Program provides an opportunity for designated school personnel to establish immediate communication and begin forming a partnership between the school, student, and the student's family. This process includes, but is not limited to, reviewing school and county policy, procedures, curriculum, rules, and expectations, providing the student and family with a school tour, discussing the school's history, and sharing valuable information about the culture and climate of the school. Finally, the Assessment and Assimilation Program provides an opportunity to identify the student's academic, social, and emotional needs by collecting and compiling invaluable data using the school's on-grade-level assessment instruments.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the Assessment and Assimilation Program for highly mobile middle school students entering Best Middle School. In the study, student data from Best's highly mobile students (transcripts, discipline reports, and attendance reports) were used to measure the relationship between academic performance (improved grades), attendance (increased time in school), and discipline (decrease in negative referrals) after attending Assessment and Assimilation at Best Middle School.

Problem Statement

I have argued that highly mobile students are quickly becoming a major crisis across the country (Popp, Stronge, & Hindman, 2003). According to the 2000 U.S. Census Report from

March 1999 to March 2000, nearly 12 million children moved into a new residence (Popp et al., 2003). A child living a life on the move can present an array of problems bouncing from school to school. Popp et al. (2003) listed problems such as low test scores, poor attendance, low self-esteem, isolation, aggression, and repeating grades. These children, researchers claimed, are half as likely to graduate from high school.

A great deal of research supporting the negative consequences of mobility can be found; however, only a small number of studies have looked at programs that address the needs of the mobile students. As Fisher, Matthews, Stafford, Nakagawa, and Durant (2002) stated, interventions for the highly mobile student may include computerized exchange systems that allow a student's records to flow rapidly from one school to the next and strategic placement of counselors and resource teachers to assess the student's needs. In addition, assigning a buddy, or peer helper to the new student along with curriculum alignment is proving beneficial (Fisher et al., 2002).

While some schools across the country are acknowledging the needs presented by highly mobile students and may be addressing some of the challenges, few have any overall plan to support students, schools, or districts that suffer from high mobility. How then can a school or district support highly mobile students? This project addresses the effects of a model that supports the needs of highly mobile students at Best Middle School, an urban middle school in Gwinnett County, Georgia.

The state of Georgia experiences one of the highest mobility rates in the country. Records show between 1999 and 2000, 26.4% of the state's population was on the move, ranking Georgia 8th in the nation. The Gwinnett County Public School (GCPS) System is the largest system in

the state of Georgia, both geographically (covering a 437-square mile area northeast of Atlanta) and in terms of population (with 161,000 students and 130 facilities).

Gwinnett County Public School students are enrolled in schools according to *cluster*, or attendance zones. A cluster is a geographical area containing two to four elementary schools that feed into one or two middle schools and move to the same high school. Gwinnett experiences a mobility rate that ranges between 36% and 43%, with the highest percentage of movement taking place in the Meadowcreek, Berkmar, and Norcross Clusters. The three high mobility clusters educate approximately 36,000 students in 17 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, and 3 high schools (www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us).

Best Middle School opened its doors as a school on August 9, 2004. The 2009-2010 school year hosted 1,134 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. The school sits on 35 acres with over 177,000 square feet of space to support teaching and learning. Best Middle School is one of two middle schools in the Meadowcreek Cluster and serves a diverse and broad ethnic population, consisting of 60% Hispanic, 24% Black, 8% Asian, 5% White, 1% Indian and 2% multi-racial. Limited English Proficient and Students with Disabilities make up 88% of Best's enrollment. Most of Best's families are from low socioeconomic status, with 88% of Best's 1,158 students on free and reduced lunch. In addition, 2% of Best's student population is considered homeless.

Enrollment and withdrawal data show Best experiences a 32% mobility rate, with over 350 students entering and exiting the school throughout the year. Student mobility is a distressing problem for Best students and their families. Best, along with every school system in the country, is dealing with the issue of mobility, not just because of the No Child Left Behind mandates, but because of the negative effects on the student. Research shows that students who

change schools often fall behind in curriculum, experience emotional and social issues, and tend to pass the “art” of mobility onto the next generation (Pierce & Ahearn, 2007).

Attendance, Discipline, and Student Achievement

Each year over 200 new students enter and another 150 students exit Best Middle School, creating attendance, academic, and discipline issues. Although research indicates that mobility alone may not put a student at risk, high mobility seems to negatively affect those students who may be at risk for other factors (Newman, 1988). As students arrive at Best, they bring with them the grief of leaving friends, family members, and, in some cases, special teachers behind. Some students react with anger, some are excited, and in some cases the student is indifferent. Regardless of how the student acts or feels they had little to no choice in the decision to relocate and change schools.

Addressing the needs of Best’s highly mobile students requires continuous monitoring of their attendance records, discipline reports, and academic progress. Attendance data pulled from Best’s School Administrative Information System (SASI) in January 2010 showed 14.68% of the students who had been enrolled 10 or more days in Best, had missed 6 or more days of school. Of the 14.68%, the data revealed that 21% of them were highly mobile students, students who entered after the official start date of August 10, 2009.

Discipline problems are another issue faced by Best Middle School. With a continuous flow of new students entering the school, administrators and teachers face constant disruption to both the culture and climate of the school and classroom. With this disruption come discipline issues that range from chronic tardiness to total school disruption. Data from Best’s SASI system

showed over a 6-month period, August 2009 to January 2010, that 12% of the 139 highly mobile students that entered Best Middle School received one or more discipline referrals.

With such a high mobility rate, teachers at Best are faced daily with students who have gaps in learning that can range from a few months to several years, and because the faculty and staff at Best are obligated to ensure all students receive an “excellent” education, they must use a variety of measures to assess student progress. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is administered in September/October to all eighth grade students; these results are used to determine initial strengths and weaknesses of the students and determine areas of the curriculum that may require more concentration. Proficiency on this measure is determined through percentile scores, and the goal is to increase the number of students performing at or above the national average, particularly in the areas of reading and mathematics.

The state level assessment used to measure student achievement and school progress is the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), which is administered to all students in Grades 6 through 8. The fifth grade CRCT scores for incoming sixth grade students are reviewed, along with the scores of current seventh and eighth grade students. The proficiency results are described as Level 1 (does not meet grade level expectations), Level 2 (meets grade level expectations), and Level 3 (exceeds grade level expectations).

In addition to the CRCT, the Georgia Writing Assessment in Grade 8 is used to determine proficiency with writing and composition skills. Gwinnett County uses this measure as a promotion requirement to high school, and data from this test is used both to improve writing instruction and to determine whether individual students need additional instruction in writing.

Moving from one school to another means moving from one curriculum to another, which affects Best’s academic outcomes. Under the current state and federal mandates set down

by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the level of academic achievement is required to increase for all Best Middle School students each year in order to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Because of its high mobility rate, Best educators are continually challenged to measure the effectiveness of strategies implemented to improve overall student performance. While low mobility schools work with primarily the same groups of students throughout the year, the faculty and staff at Best are forced to work with highly mobile students whose scores do not necessarily reflect the true performance level of the school.

For Best Middle School teachers, teaching and learning are greatly impacted due to the need for repeating and reviewing lessons, constantly introducing new students to the class, experiencing the sudden departure of other students, and presiding over a generally less stable environment. According to data from Best's SASI system, 50% of the highly mobile students entering Best between August 2009 and January 2010 were academically challenged in one or more of the four core subjects (LA, MA, SC, and SS). High mobility rates clearly place a strain on Best's teachers and support personnel.

Program Development

Ms. Smith, the principal at Best Middle School, recognized a need for an outreach program to connect highly mobile students and parents to the school. Best Middle School is part of a cluster, a group of schools in the same geographical region. Over the last decade the cluster has experienced an influx of students from diverse backgrounds and cultures leading to a mobile community. To this end, it became essential to develop and implement a program that would welcome new students and their families to the school and begin the process of building a partnership between the school and the family.

The program that resulted, Assessment and Assimilation, encourages immediate communication and promotes a partnership style relationship with new students and their families. Procedures include the following: Phase 1, a discussion between the Assessment and Assimilation facilitator, the student, the parent or guardian, and possibly other school personnel. During this time, past and current academic, discipline, and attendance information is reviewed and discussed in order to identify academic weaknesses, as well as any social, or emotional needs. The Assessment and Assimilation process starts when the new student begins the registration process.

Phase 1: Introduction and registration (30 minutes). The registration process in a school can be a difficult and frightening time for the new student and family. Therefore, the place where families go to complete a registration packet should be quiet, inviting, and nonthreatening. It is important that the student and family feel welcomed immediately. This simple gesture begins the process of forming the relationship between the school and family; they become genuinely grateful when extra time is taken to greet and speak with them. While talking, the facilitator or registrar can begin reviewing the new student's paperwork from the previous school.

If the registrar indicates all required documents are present, the new student and family go to the second phase. However, if the paperwork is not complete the school's policy must be followed. For example, if the birth certificate, shot record, lease or deed, parent or guardian picture ID, and previous or current report card are not available the student cannot be enrolled. When a situation does occur that keeps a student from being registered precious time is lost; therefore, having a new student program such as the Assessment and Assimilation Program provides the facilitator or the registrar the opportunity to expedite the registration process.

Instead of faxing a request to the previous school and waiting for a response, the school is contacted by phone and the information collected verbally, which allows for the registration process to continue moving forward expeditiously. By taking the time to assist the family in this way, a trusting relationship and strong sense of partnership is formed.

Once the registration paperwork has been completed the Assessment and Assimilation facilitator should provide the family with a New Family Packet. The packet includes information and brochures about the school, parent center (if applicable), calendar of events, parent classes and workshops, grade level curriculum, promotion criteria, and a school calendar. The facilitator or registrar continues to build the relationship listening to questions and concerns and answering questions. When questions or concerns are outside the facilitator's or registrar's area of expertise, an administrator or counselor should be requested to intercede.

Phase II: Explanations of expectations (20 minutes). Reviewing the student's grades, discipline, and attendance is vital and should be done by a certified teacher, counselor, or school administrator. Knowing this information is key to the program's success. First, it gives the Assessment and Assimilation facilitator an opportunity to talk to the parent(s) with the student present. Next, it demonstrates how important this information is to both the parent(s) and student and, finally, it sets a foundation of accountability for the student and parent, leaving no misunderstandings of the expectations. Furthermore, if the student is entering the school with academic, attendance, or discipline issues it affords the facilitator the opportunity to request the grade level administrator come meet and talk with the student and family, continuing to build the relationship, and to affirm the expectations. Furthermore, time offers a perfect opportunity to review Title I documents and consult with parents/guardians about the issues faced by highly

mobile students. Once the registration paperwork is complete and time permits, incoming students remain at the school the rest of the day to complete pre-assessments. However, if time does not allow for completing the registration process, the student and family return the following morning.

Meeting and greeting a new student and family is the first step to building a trusting relationship. Therefore, if the Assessment and Assimilation facilitator, counselor, or administrator were not able to meet with the parent during the registration process on day one, the registrar may request that the parent return the following morning. If the parent is unable to return, the Assessment and Assimilation facilitator or registrar should call the parent by the end of the second day and provide information about their child's assessment scores, schedule, and discuss any problems or concerns. If the student needs to return a second day to complete assessments, they are instructed to go directly to the registrar or Assessment and Assimilation facilitator upon entering the school.

The school tour is another key to the program. The tour helps the students begin the assimilation process by sharing the school's history, talking about the culture and climate of the school, and answering questions while walking through the school. New students claim that talking to them about the school and allowing them the time to learn their way around the school helps them to feel more secure, safe, and self-assured.

While the students wait for their schedules, they are given a New Student Packet to review, which includes AKS/Parent-Student Handbook (Appendix A), a Student Agenda (Appendix B), and a color coded folder for all documents that go to the student's homeroom teacher. One method used to get the student involved in their registration is to have them complete a new student information sheet (Appendix C) and then staple the sheet to the front of

their Assessment and Assimilation file. As they work on the information sheet, the facilitator talks with the student about curriculum, rules, and their agenda.

Phase III allows for the collection of academic data by testing current knowledge using Gwinnett County's leveled reading, math, and problem-solving skills pre-assessments. These pre-assessments are taken by all students in the school; therefore, the assessments taken by the highly mobile student, while in Assessment and Assimilation, are scored and forwarded to their core academic teachers to assist with guiding the highly mobile student's daily instruction.

Phase III: Assessments--Math, language arts, and writing. Before assessments are distributed, the procedures are carefully reviewed with the new students. It is important that new students understand the school's policies and procedures about assessments. The students hear about performance expectations and the difference between assessments and tests. For the writing assessment examples of the expectations, written and verbal should be provided. Lunch can be eaten in the Assessment and Assimilation room or a quiet place so students can talk with each other.

Finally, during Phase IV all data are recorded on the Assessment and Assimilation Data Report and sent to Best's Intervention Team, a group made up of the administrators, counselors, ESE lead teacher, ELL lead teacher, parent coordinator, academic coach, and school social worker. Best's graduation counselor creates the new student schedules and oversees the assimilation of the new student into their schedule. In addition, during the weekly intervention team meeting the new student report is reviewed and individual students are discussed.

Phase IV: Monitoring the student, scoring assessments, and sharing results. This piece of Assessment and Assimilation is the third key to the program. This is the time to observe, watch, and listen. While scoring the assessments, the new students begin sharing information about them as they get to know other new students in the room. In most cases, information not shared during the registration process will surface. For example, a student may talk about being in small groups at their last school (IEP), or share how they were pulled out of their classroom to attend a class with fewer students for history at their last school (IEP). The student may talk about attending an alternative school (suspended or expelled), or share how their mom picked them up from school and they left the state (abduction or domestic dispute).

If this information does surface, it is imperative that the necessary experts are contacted and given as much information as possible. Contacting the previous school(s) and speaking with the counselor, dean, or administrator usually gets the necessary information. Many times the previous school has no idea the student has left.

When the student's new enrollment file has nothing but a rental agreement, shot record, and birth certificate this is cause for a red flag. Most schools will fax over important information for placement purposes when it is understood that the student is being enrolled. Some states or counties do not indicate if the student is a Special Education student on the withdrawal paperwork. During the assessment process, the Assessment and Assimilation facilitator closely monitors each student's behavior, interactions, and work ethics making notes of any concerns. Again, if something unusual is observed, a qualified person, counselor, administrator, or graduation counselor is contacted to come and address the concerns, while proceeding with gathering more information. These concerns can include questions about guardianship, possible

expulsion from the previous school, failing grades in core subjects, a large number of discipline problems, or attendance issues.

The Assessment and Assimilation Data Report is used to record new student data. The report is sent out daily to administrators, department chairs, academic coordinators, counselors, school social worker, school psychologist, and the mentor coordinator. The report is color-coded, allowing each department to quickly identify their information and begin addressing any issues the new student might be experiencing.

Phase V: Notify appropriate people. Notifying the teachers ahead of time that they are getting a new student is imperative. Therefore, the facilitator should e-mail or contact the new students' team of teachers before they are taken to class. This gives the teachers an opportunity to prepare for the student and when the student does meet the teacher, the teacher can call the student by name. This helps the student feel welcome and makes assimilation easier.

Many times the new student transfers into the school with failing grades or the student is performing below grade level. In this case, the school's experts should be notified immediately, giving the parent(s) an opportunity to meet the school staff who will work with their child. The flowchart (Figure 1) delineates the Assessment and Assimilation process.

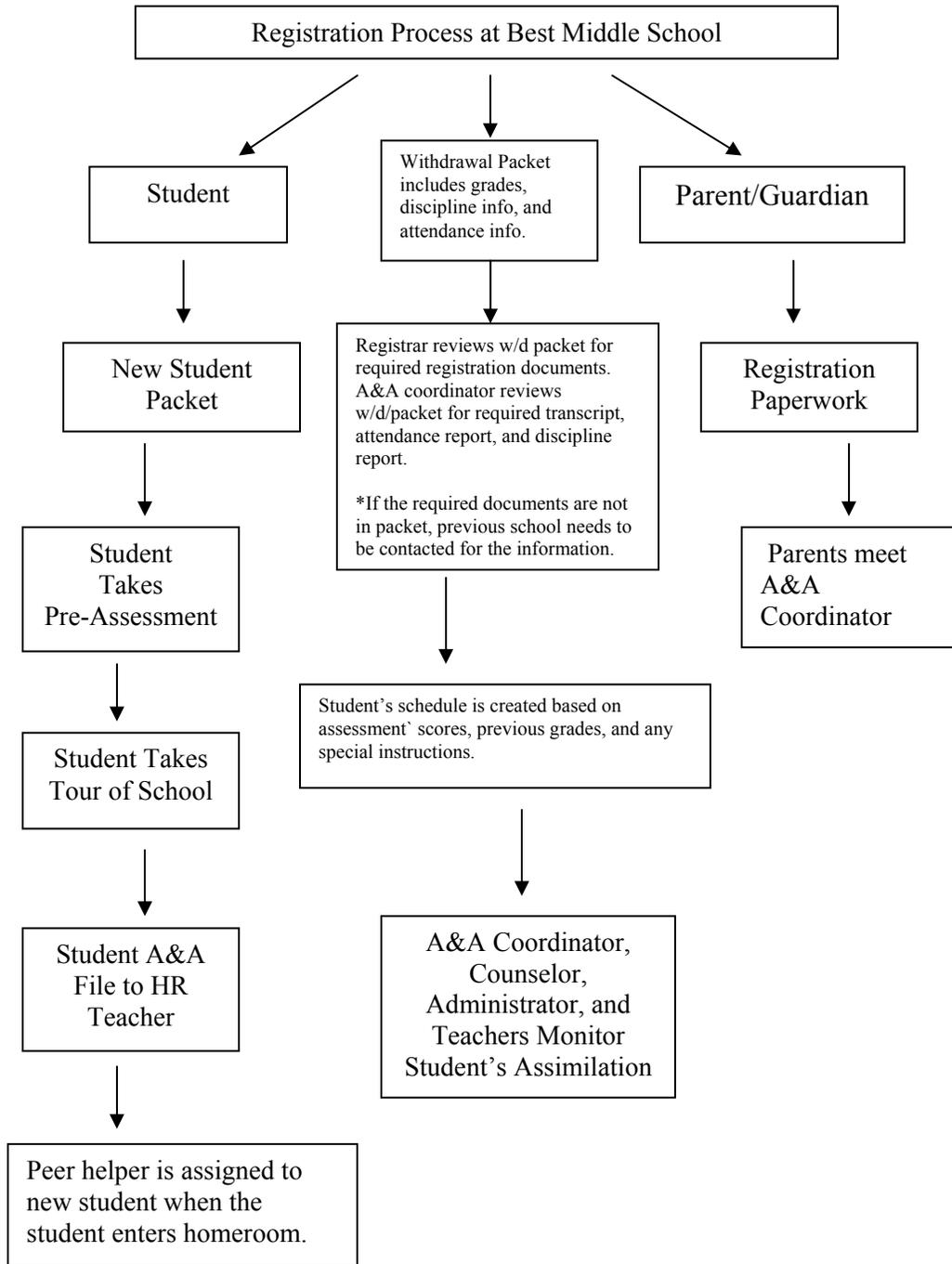


Figure 1. Assessment and assimilation flowchart.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was to provide educational stakeholders with relevant data showing the relationship between a high mobility student orientation program and improved academic, discipline, and attendance reports. There are many factors that negatively affect student achievement, student attendance, and student discipline. This study examined the impact that Assessment and Assimilation, a new student orientation program, has on highly mobile students entering school after the scheduled start date. If children who change schools often are to combat the academic, behavioral, and attendance issues they face and become empowered, then educators and researchers must put something in place to address the issue of mobility.

This study was based on secondary data gathered from Gwinnett County's Schools Administrative Student Information system (SASI). Achievement, discipline, and attendance data were derived from SASI.

Research Questions

1. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program affected changes in student achievement as measured by grade point average?
2. What is the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and student achievement (GPA) for male and female students?
3. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program had an influence on the number of discipline referrals?
4. What is the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and discipline referrals between male and female students?

5. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program had an influence on the number of absences?

6. What is the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and absences between male and female students?

7. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program affected changes in student achievement as measured by grade point average after controlling for other variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, free/reduced lunch program, ESOL)?

These questions were answered through the use of quantitative research methods by comparing data contained in student records (school transcripts, school attendance records, and school discipline records) for students in the year 2004, who attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program prior to being placed in their schedule, with the same information collected in 2005, who did not attend the Assessment and Assimilation Program prior to being placed in their schedule.

Limitations

The data utilized in this study were limited to one urban middle school in Gwinnett County, Georgia. Curriculum varies from state to state at different grade levels and could therefore limit the ability to extrapolate the results of this study to other states. Another limitation is the number of students in the August group does not equal the number of students in the January group. A third limitation is the data reviewed is from two different groups of students from two different times of the year.

Conclusion

Every day, thousands of students across the county leave their school and are enrolled in a new school for various reasons. In many cases this constant flow of new students disrupts the school's environment, the teacher's lessons, overall classroom learning, and the mobile students' levels of engagement and yet, this is the trend in our highly transient western society.

A 1994 General Accounting Office report on elementary school children indicated that approximately 17% of the nation's third-graders (more than 500,000 children) have attended at least three different schools since starting first grade (Kerbow, 1996). The question that arises is "how are schools getting students to engage in their learning through all of the movement?"

In addition, many times the transient students' records from previously attended schools never arrive, so invaluable information that assists with issues of placement is lost. The school is then pushed to assess and place new students without knowing the students' educational history. Administration as well as other personnel is saddled with blindly placing new students without the benefit of reading and math levels. Without records, the school is unaware if a child has a learning disability, a behavioral issue, or any known medical problems and sometimes parents can be a source of needed information, but not always.

Examining the Assessment and Assimilation Program should reveal if this type of support for highly mobile students is effective in improving academic achievement, decreasing discipline referrals, and improving student attendance. In chapter 2, I present a review of related research on academic achievement, problem behavior, and the chronic attendance issues seen with highly mobile students. In addition, I look into interventions that are being used to welcome and involve mobile students and their families. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and design of the study including a description of the statistical methods used and variables utilized. Chapter

4 presents the results of the study. Finally, in chapter 5, I discuss the findings in relation to the literature of highly mobile students, consider their input for educational policy, and offer suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review of the literature informs this study by examining research on the history of student mobility; mobility statistics; and the negative effect student mobility has on achievement, attendance, discipline, and schools. I then examine what schools have done in response to the problem of mobility and consider how educators should respond to its challenge.

Review of the Literature

History

Since colonial times, migration and the displaced student have been common problems faced by educators. In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States and was astonished by how easily Americans moved.

In the United States, a man will carefully construct a home in which to spend his old age and sell it before the roof is on. He plants a garden and leaves it just as the trees are coming into bearing. He brings it into tillage and leaves, for other men to bring in the crops. He embraces a profession then gives it up. He settles in a place, which soon afterward leaves to carry his changeable longings elsewhere. If his private affairs leave him any leisure, he instantly plunges into the vortex of politics and if at the end of a year of unremitting labor he finds he has a few days' vacation, his eager curiosity whirls him over the vast extent of the United States and he will travel fifteen hundred miles in a few days to shake off his happiness. (de Tocqueville, 1835/2004, p. 623)

In the years since de Tocqueville's study, mobility has continued to define American life. The movement west, the rise of urban communities, the influx of immigrants, the Great Depression, and the Second World War witness this challenge among other social events.

The impact of student mobility on the American education system has gone hand in hand with the transformation of schooling from a system of exclusion to a system of inclusion. In the early years, education was reserved for the elite class; however, as mobility and diversity increased education became available for all. This is evident in the influx of poor immigrants into urban schools and the migration of rural Blacks from the south during the Great Depression. These changes have been instrumental in changing the values, customs, and traditions found in the early education system (Sass, 2009).

Increases in multicultural populations in American schools meant the assimilation of the exceptional and culturally different student had to be addressed. With diversity came prejudice, victimization, and racism. Today teachers are faced with the consequences: they have to become aware of the feelings and self-concept of all students, and promote fair treatment. The curriculum has to reflect a multicultural prospective and the mobile student faces even greater challenges (Reed, 1991).

By the 1940s, northern cities began to suffer from racial tensions and severe overcrowding brought on by President Franklin Roosevelt's executive order banning discrimination in the nation's war industries. Out of Roosevelt's order arose an opportunity for Blacks to migrate from the south in search of jobs and relocate into predominantly White neighborhoods in the northern cities (Rury, 2005). With the close of World War II, soldiers began returning home, discovering African Americans had moved into their neighborhoods. After unsuccessfully attempting to move the Blacks out, the White population moved to the suburbs (White-flight) establishing new and primarily racially homogenous neighborhoods.

The housing boom of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s was just one example of expansion and success of capitalism in America. However, with prosperity in the suburban society came an

economic depression for minorities. As the American Dream became a reality for White America, many minorities fell victim to the social and economic blight of the inner city.

As racial problems mounted, Civil Rights Legislation sought to enforce the Supreme Court *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision to dismantle racial segregation found in schools across the United States. This involved the integration and even busing of large numbers of students.

The 1960s also brought demands for a better system of education resulting in a closer look at the process of teaching and learning. Americans began to believe the nation was in a state of crisis, suffering from a gap between the economic and military needs of the country and the capacity of the American educational system (Rury, 2005). Poverty factors and the increase in the number of low socioeconomic status families impacted the way political leaders viewed mobility and education (Pope et al., 2003).

Most importantly, the civil rights movement of the 1960s brought to light the inequalities in the American education system. To address the needs of disadvantaged students, the Johnson Administration passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the most expansive federal education bill in American history. Educational opportunity began to be viewed as vital for ensuring that all Americans had a chance to better their circumstance.

By the 1970s, the American economy began to slow down, exacerbating the effects of residential segregation. Efforts to desegregate schools through mandatory busing drew increasing opposition and were tempered by the recognition that moving poor children did not lead to increased academic achievement or improved school experiences.

Other populations also presented problems to educators. For example, the Vietnam War drew to a close and Vietnamese families began migrating to the U. S., creating an influx of

mobile students into American schools and, once again, the courts were required to step in and mandate that schools rise to the occasion. In 1974 the Supreme Court ruled in *Lau v. Nichols*, schools could no longer discriminate against individuals who did not speak English (Cambron-McCabe, McCarthy, & Thomas, 2004), followed a year later by the passing of Public Law 94-142, requiring a free appropriate education for all children with disabilities.

In the final decades of the 20th century, the United States education system continued to experience an influx of immigrants, both legal and illegal. Due to the increased focus on student academic achievement, in particular minority achievement, brought about first by the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk* and then the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), schools are now held accountable for the academic achievement of all children regardless of race, nationality, or socioeconomic status.

Despite the ever increasing diversity of American society, today's schools are as segregated as those at the time of *Brown v. the Board of Education*. This new isolation has transmitted into a new kind of mobility, the transient family, moving in search of work from one low socioeconomic situation to another. Even though mobility in the United States is not new, the faces of the students who experience mobility have changed (Volo & Volo, 2007).

Educating undocumented, migrant, and highly mobile children offers unique social, political, and educational problems for American schools (Green, 2003). Frequent moves, poverty, gaps in education, and language barriers hinder social and educational opportunities for those communities who receive large numbers of immigrants throughout the year. Student mobility is also disproportionately higher among low income, minority, migrant, and homeless children (Hartman, 2003). Hartman (2003) stated, poor families move 50% to 100% more than

middle income families and in most cases a homeless student will be required to change schools due to registration criteria and transportation issues.

When a foreclosure forces children from their homes they too are forced to leave their school, disrupting their education, peer relationships, and social network (Isaacs and Lovell, 2008). School districts have been seeing and feeling the effects of the economic downturn and rise in foreclosures in the number of homeless students entering their classrooms. “The silent sufferers of these foreclosures are the estimated 2 million children and youth who are losing their homes” (Isaacs and Lovell, 2008, p. 1).

The estimated number of children who will be directly impacted by the mortgage crisis reaches into the millions (1,952,000), indicating that 504,600 Latino, 281,200 Black, and 1,166,200 other children will be impacted by foreclosure (Isaacs and Lovell, 2008). Children are the unintended victims and this problem will not be solved overnight. Until the economy turns around and the issue of foreclosures is resolved, school districts and local schools are going to have to turn their attention to the children caught in the middle of this crisis.

Statistics

According to a 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS), between 2004 and 2005, 39.9 million United States residents moved, less than the 40.1 million who moved between 2002 and 2003. Over the past decade, moving rates have steadily declined dropping from 16% in 1995 to 14% in 2005, the lowest since 1948. Additionally, the majority of moves over the last 10 years were over state lines; however, the majority of the moves made between 2004 and 2005 were within the same county. Of the moves made during the one-year period between 2004 and 2005, 57% of them occurred within the same

county, while 20 % were to different counties within the same state, 19% were to a different state, and 5% were from another country compared to 1995 when 66% of the moves were in the same county and 14% crossed state lines (CPS ASEC).

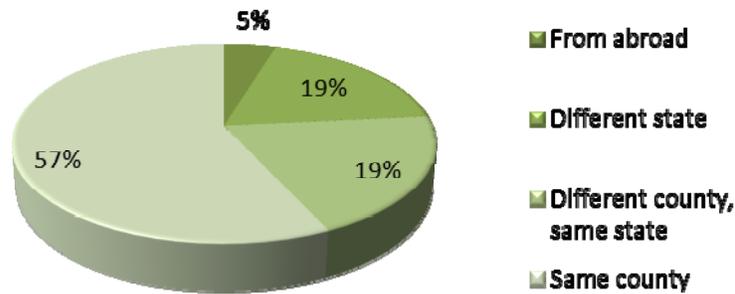


Figure 2. Percent distribution of movers by type of move: 2004 to 2005. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement)

Mobility by age showed one-third of 20 to 29 year olds had moved the previous year, more than twice the moving rate of all people one year and older. Mobility peaked during the 20s and began to decrease with age. However, with the migration of retirees, the mobility data for the advanced ages show that 28% of all 55 to 64 year olds moved in 2004 from one state to another, leveling off at age 70.

Mobility by race and Hispanic origin found the Hispanic subgroup to be the most mobile at 19%, Black was just under at 16%, followed by Asians at 15%, and non-Hispanic Whites at 12% the lowest. Among all movers, 60% Hispanics, 63% Blacks, 55% non-Hispanic White, and 44% Asians moved within the same county. Finally, moves from abroad were made up of 17% Asian, 11% Hispanic, 3% Black, and 2% non-Hispanic White.

Approximately half of all people who moved between 2004 and 2005 gave housing-related reasons for relocating. Eighteen percent wanted a better or new apartment; 9% wanted to own; 7% were looking for cheaper housing; 4% wanted a better neighborhood, or less crime; and 9% gave other housing reasons. Of those giving housing-related reasons for moving, 6 out of 10 moved across the county, 3 out of 10 moved from out of the county, and 1 out of 10 moved from out of the country.

Family-related reasons included, but were not limited to, changes in marital status (7%), establishing a household (8%), and other family-related reasons (12%). In addition, the survey showed that 1 in 10 people moving in county, 3 in 10 people moving from out of county, and 2 out of 10 moving from abroad gave family reasons as the primary reason for their moves.

Interestingly, the survey showed that only 1 in 5 movers (18%) moved for the purpose of starting a new job, a better commute (3%), looking for work (2%), and retirement or other employment-related reasons (2%). Finally, of those moving within the county, 7% gave an employment-related reason for the move, while 29% of people living outside the county gave the same reason, and 55% moved from outside the country for the same reasons, employment.

The South was the only region that experienced a net increase in population growth from domestic migration. Between 2004 and 2005, 1.3 million people ages 1 and older moved into the South from other regions of the U. S. During this time, another 907,000 people moved away, for a net gain of 438,000. If you take the movers from abroad into consideration, the South has a total gain of 1.1 million people during this time period.

Finally, as Congress continues to debate comprehensive changes to the U. S. immigration system, it is important to note the numbers of permanent immigrants who legally and illegally move into and across the United States. Between the fiscal year (FY) 2002 and 2006, the annual

level of legal immigration averaged about 1.1 million and illegal added approximately another 800,000 people moving into the United States to make their homes (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2005).

The population percentage change between April 1, 2000, and July 1, 2009, in the state of Georgia reached 20.1%, far exceeding the national average of 9.1%. The U. S. Census Bureau estimates that 9,829,211 people lived in the state of Georgia as of 2009, with persons less than 18 years of age making up 26.3% of the population. According to the data, over 50% of the families living in Georgia between 1995 and 2000 moved to a new residence either inside the county, outside the county, outside the state, or outside the country.

Gwinnett County, Georgia's, current population is 808,167 and has seen steady growth over the last decade. The U. S. Census Bureau reports the population percentage change between April 1, 2000, and July 1, 2009, to be 37.3%, well above Georgia's 20.1%. Persons under the age of 18 make up 30.2% of Gwinnett's population, again over the state average of 26.3%, and 59% of Gwinnett's families moved between 1995 and 2000. According to the U. S. Census Bureau, Gwinnett's demographics consist of Caucasian 65.8%, Caucasian not Hispanic 49.2%, African American 22.1%, Hispanic or Latino origin 18%, Asian 9.6%, American Indian .6%, and Multiracial 1.8%. The average annual number and rate of net domestic in-migration for Gwinnett County between 2000 and 2004 was 11,214 persons, an increase of 20% annually. Finally, the report shows the homeownership rate in Gwinnett is 72.4%, leaving 37.6% of the county's residents renting, doubling up, or staying in shelters.

The U. S. Census is studying patterns of movement in order to find clues that may lead to important information about population distribution in the future. According to the U. S. Census, of the 287.1 million people ages one and older living in the U. S. in 2005, 39.9 million of them

lived in different addresses in 2004. Out of those 39.9 million, the Census showed young adults between the ages of 20 and 29 had the highest moving rate, more than doubling the moving rate of people one and older. Finally, the data showed 14% of people 15 years and older with an income of \$45,000 or less were more likely to move than those who made over \$45,000.

In addition, the statistics showed that mobility varied among Whites, Hispanics, and Blacks, with Hispanics (19%) and Blacks (16%) having the highest rate of mobility. Of those who moved within the same county, 64% were Hispanic and 63% Black. Finally, the data showed the primary reason that was given for moving was housing related (lower rent, buying a home, moving to a better area, and moving in with family among other reasons).

Effects of Mobility on Student Achievement

Accountability and student mobility mix like oil and vinegar. Researchers state that moving a child one time during their school career will in most cases not cause a great deal of emotional, social, or academic harm. However, the highly mobile student, the student who changes schools six or more times between kindergarten and 12th grade, may experience an interruption of lesson content, interruption in social ties, and profound feelings of isolation (Engec, 2006).

National studies examining the impact of mobility on academic achievement clearly indicate that changing schools for reasons other than promotion at any grade level has a negative impact on a student's achievement: indeed, it creates an achievement gap between mobile and non-mobile students (Beatty, 2010; Rumberger, 2003; Swanson & Schneider, 1999). According to an Executive Summary written by Paik and Phillips (2002) from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 26% of non-mobile students are low achievers, compared to 41% of

highly mobile students. In addition, children who change schools three or more times before their eighth grade year are four times more likely to drop out (Beatty, 2010).

Additionally, studies investigating achievement by gender have produced surprising results. While highly mobile male and female students tend to receive similar mean scale scores on math achievement exams, reading scores provide very different results (Burkham, Lee, & Dwyer, 2009). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, data from the 2009-2010 school year showed girls outperformed boys by nine scale score points on the reading achievement exam (U. S. Department of Education, 2010).

Finally, Paik and Phillips (2002) reported that continuous school changes result in learning gaps, with students who move three or more times over a 6-year period falling as much as a full year behind. Gaps in learning require teachers to go back, review, and re-teach. Remediation takes precious time; in addition, if the school experiences a large number of mobile students, academic performance scores for the whole school can drop.

Parental involvement, test scores, grades, retention, and high school graduation have been studied to determine the impact of mobility. Some researchers suggest that any personal and family issues contributing to the student's mobility should be taken into account when trying to determine the cause of poor achievement, as well as other problems in school (Rumberger & Larson, 1998). In any event, recovering from a move takes time for all involved. It does not matter if it is across the street or to another country, a life changing event occurs. Walls (2003) stated, the time needed for a mobile student to recover academically from a move could take 4 to 6 months. Research also indicated moving within the district or outside of the district produces the same affect for the mobile student, which produces the same challenges most mobile students produce for school personnel and parents (Paik & Phillips, 2002).

Effects of Mobility on Student Attendance

Student attendance is defined as the total number of days a student attends school measured against the total number of school days. Several research studies show that high mobility and low attendance go hand-in-hand. The Kids Mobility Project (1998), a study performed by a group of planners and researchers in Minneapolis, found that consistent attendance proves to be a strong gauge for determining student performance. Researchers from The Kids Mobility Project conducted two studies and a review of research on mobility and found that the average reading rate of students who moved more than two times was half of the stable student's reading rate and students who were on average absent from class 20% of the time experienced scores 20 points lower than students who attended school regularly.

High rates of school mobility are linked to disengagement emotionally, socially, and academically (Malmgren & Gagnon, 2005). For years, educators have argued that academic success is a function of student engagement. In addition, research has shown that higher rates of absenteeism are associated with lower achievement (Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, & Vincent, 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004). Knesting and Waldron (2006) claimed, students who are lower performing are more likely to reduce their attendance rate, which in turn impacts their subsequent achievement and so on until finally they drop out.

In order for students to master school curriculum they must attend school on a consistent basis. Students who establish chronic absenteeism at an early age may set a precedence that could continue throughout their life (Dunn, Kadane, & Garrow, 2003). Many states are adopting strong and rigid attendance policies and taking proactive measures to ensure all students attend school regularly.

Effects of Mobility on Student Behavior

Children of military families are considered highly mobile; however, they do not share the same results as highly mobile civilian students (Richardson, 2002). Department of Defense records show that between the Air Force, Army, Navy, Coast Guard, and National Guard, 35% of their students change schools year to year, with 32% to 50% of the students qualifying for free and reduced lunch and only 6% of the military parents holding postsecondary degrees (Walls, 2003).

Interestingly, students of military families perform equal to or above the public schools national average. DoDEA schools claim this is due to their expectations for parental involvement, community support, school accountability, and student attendance and performance (Smrekar, Guthrie, Owens, & Sims, 2001). Various strategies are set in motion to address the challenges and promote academic and social success for the children prior to the new families' arrival. The strategies include high expectations for school success, a welcoming school community, school counselors to advocate for the needs of students, and the expectation that parents participate in their child's education through attending parent meetings, classes, and workshops along with volunteering at the school (Walls, 2003).

Like the DoDEA schools, the faculty and staff of high mobility schools can set the tone for mobile students. If the student feels welcome and socially and emotionally supported, they may experience an easier transition with fewer adjustment problems. Julianelle and Foscarinis (2003) stated that highly mobile students are hesitant to establish new friendships. Making new friends, adjusting to a new school, establishing a new life, and learning a new curriculum can be overwhelming. Many times the mobile student expects to move again at any time, so making

new friends and doing schoolwork is a waste of time and energy not to mention painful (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003).

A study by Nelson, Somoni, and Adelman (1996) of 2,524 kindergarten and first-grade students looked at the relationship between initial poor school functioning (i.e., lower behavior ratings and higher absenteeism) and high mobility over a 3-year period. The researchers collected academic, behavioral, and school adjustment data over a 3-year period. Thirty-five percent of the children changed schools over the 3-year period; 5% changed schools more than once, with an overall yearly mean of 13.4%. Analyses of the data indicated students who moved the most “tended to be from single-family homes, have poorer initial school behavior ratings and school adjustment” (Nelson et al., 1996, p. 1).

Due to a disconnect in the educational experience of highly mobile students, many are at an increased risk of feeling alienated. Casper, DeLuca, and Estacion (2009), stated school change may detract and inhibit highly mobile students from forming bonds both in and out of school and when bonds to society are weak or absent, involvement in antisocial behavior is more tempting because the person has nothing to lose. Studies show that mobile students exhibit more behavior problems, academic issues, and social inadequacies than non-mobile or stable students (Alexander et al., 1996). When a student enters or exits school after the official start date, they are left with no choice but to adjust to new academic and social routines. Missing the start date means the student misses the opportunity to bond with teachers, form friendships with peers, and get to know the rest of the school community (Fisher et. el., 2002). In addition, most mobile students will not experience a formal student orientation regarding the expectations for conduct and academic performance that is required by the school.

The Effect of Mobility on Schools

To calculate the mobility rate for a school, the total number of students entering and withdrawing from the school during a calendar year is divided by the opening day's official enrollment (Fowler-Finn, 2001). All personnel in the school feel the impact of highly mobile students. In most cases, the teachers are required to stop and address the new student's needs, which hinders instructional momentum for the stable students and leaves the teacher feeling overwhelmed and frustrated (Fisher et al., 2002).

Students entering the school from other counties may also place extra burdens on an already challenged school (Rumberger, 2003). Under the No Child Left Behind Act, Title I schools are just as accountable as non-Title schools; therefore, schools suffering with issues of high mobility are forced into providing programs and specialized services targeting the needs of this low achieving population (Ascher, 1991). Studies show the average test scores for non-mobile high school students in high mobility schools is significantly lower than the scores of high school students in low mobility schools (Rumberger, 2003). In a California study Rumberger found,

School personnel characterized the overall effects of student mobility at the school level as the "chaos" factor that influences classroom-learning activities, teacher morale and administrative burdens--all of which can impact the learning and achievement of all students in a school. (p. 11)

Teacher concerns about high mobility are being heard throughout the country. Teachers complain that highly mobile students enter their classroom with negative attitudes and are disengaged from their learning (Sanderson, 2003). In a study conducted by Sanderson between April 1999 and May 2000, in which 32 teachers were interviewed to determine how they engaged highly transient students in their classrooms, she found three primary themes.

First, teachers found it difficult dealing with the attitudes and behaviors of highly mobile students when they entered the classroom. Teachers stated that many times a new student would enter their classroom angry, hostile, and aggressive. One teacher felt that highly mobile students feel inadequate and the only way they can make their presence felt is to act out or behave in an aggressive manner. Second, was a lack of academic preparation. The teachers stated that mobile students lack a strong academic foundation because of the constant changing of schools and curriculum. With weak basic skills and educational gaps, the teachers stated it was close to impossible to catch them up, much less prepare them for mandated testing. Some teachers expressed that just helping them adjust and assimilate into the classroom was a full-time job. Finally is the issue of time. The need to review information took a great deal of time away from instruction. Highly mobile students arrive with little to no records from previous schools, so teachers have no idea about the student's level of knowledge. The teacher is in a position of having to stop, assess, and develop a plan to bring the student up to date or as close as possible.

In addition, Sanderson (2003) found teachers were concerned about the amount of time it takes to develop a trusting relationship with highly mobile students. They claimed that in many cases the mobile student relocates just as their friendships and relationships begin to grow. In one study, Rumberger (2003) found that teachers who worked in high mobility schools felt the climate was one of bedlam. They claimed interrupted instruction, low teacher moral, and an overburdened administration were results of high mobility. Teachers also felt that chronic and constant disruption from students moving in and out of the classroom created an atmosphere of disruption and distraction making it difficult to teach, to allow students to work in groups, and to assign large projects to be completed over an extended period of time (Rumberger, 2003).

Most school personnel agree high mobility can create a “chaos factor” where disruption and distraction reign. Mobility takes a toll on the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration, classroom instruction and learning, and teacher morale (Williams, 2003). Many teachers agree, not only do mobile students suffer, but non-mobile students are also penalized.

In a study performed in a Washington D.C. school, Williams (2003) interviewed teachers to get their view on the impact of mobility in their classrooms. Teachers unanimously responded that daily interruptions created by incoming and outgoing mobile students took precious and valuable time from instruction. For incoming students, teachers have to double back and re-teach lessons, which take time away from the whole class and individual instruction and students. For outgoing students, teachers have to prepare grades, collect textbooks, library books, and verify lunch charges in order to complete the withdrawal form, finding these responsibilities time consuming and exhausting (Williams, 2003).

What Successful Schools Do

The negative impact of student mobility will continue to grow as long as there is poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and a host of other reasons. Devising a plan to stop high mobility would be a waste of time, money, and energy. However, planning at the district and local school level to ensure that mobile students entering the school are made to feel welcomed, accepted, and able to learn may change a negative situation into a positive outcome (Popp, 2004).

There are several ways schools have responded to ensure smooth transitions and mitigate the negative effects of student mobility. In some schools, officials and counselors encourage families and students to remain in school, if possible. If this is not a possibility, they encourage families and students to withdraw at the end of the school year, or at the end of a grading period.

Some school districts have implemented policies that permit students to attend their current schools as opposed to transferring to a new school within the district if the family moves. A small number of schools have prepared and implemented procedures to enroll transfer students quickly and efficiently. It is important that transfer students spend as little time out of school as possible (Cornille, Bayer, & Smyth, 1983). This procedure includes a meeting between the family, student, and school counselor to review academic records and the school's policies and procedures.

All schools need to establish ongoing activities to support incoming transfer students and families.

Mobile students look to the school, second only to the family as the most significant social setting. Yet the role of school in facilitating the adjustment process to a new community has been examined superficially only, with little specific attention to services that might be offered. Usually, the adaptations of the newcomer to a school are the most salient, immediate challenges for the child. (Cornille et al., 1983)

Because the school is often where a child learns the norms, values, and views of the community, how school personnel integrate a new student could be key in the assimilation process. In addition, it is recommended that schools institute small, grade-level, support groups made up of peers to help new students transition (Gillespie, Everhart, & McNulty, 1999).

It is important for those teachers who chose to work in high mobility schools to understand their students will have greater needs than the students at schools with low or virtually no mobility. Teachers of high mobility students must possess the ability to determine the academic needs of the student through assessments, investigation, or by working with the school's new student orientation program, if they have a program. Once the student's needs are known, the teacher must have the ability to plan and deliver instruction that is rigorous and makes appropriate use of time and materials (Grant, Popp, & Stronge, 2008). In a study on high

performing, high poverty schools conducted by the National Center for Homeless Education on at-risk and highly mobile students, researchers found that teachers used testing as a regular part of their curriculum and used the data to make decisions regarding instruction (Grant et al., 2008).

Districts and schools must adopt policies aimed at keeping children in the same school throughout the year. Establishing a “school of origination” policy provides parents and students the opportunity to stay in the school where they started the year. Such policies, like the one in Branch, Texas, allows students to stay at their current school following a move out of the school’s attendance zone (Temple & Reynolds, 1999).

Establishing district and local school parent centers is an initiative some counties and schools have taken. In the Victoria Independent School District in Victoria, Texas, school leaders found most of their mobility issues were intra-district not inter-district; therefore, they implemented district parent centers specifically to address the needs of parents, old and new, in their attendance area and placed all homeless students in one school for the year (Williams, 2003). In addition, other districts have implemented homework centers based in highly mobile neighborhoods and staffed with qualified teacher aides and located in clean and safe environments (Paik & Phillips, 2002).

Finally, districts and schools are looking at minimal redistricting, establishing and aligning common curriculum, establishing a consistent longitudinal electronic tracking system to allow school officials to track students (Gillespie et al., 1999) and working with management groups that operate apartment complexes and other rental properties to change renewal lease properties from one calendar year to summer to summer lease agreements (Gillespie et al., 1999).

Along with the above methods, various ideas are being tried across the country to combat the negative effects of student mobility for the mobile student as well as the school, classroom, peers, and teachers (Rumberger, 2003). Parent education programs explaining the effects of moving and introducing them to the procedures and rules of the new school, reception committees, tours, classroom buddies, and staff development programs are being designed and implemented.

Conclusion

The preceding review of the research provides a general argument, understanding, and problems associated with high mobility students. Statistics show that millions of children move during the school year as well as year to year, resulting in academic, social, and emotional issues. Research strongly supports the belief that high mobility also has a negative effect on non-mobile students, schools, teachers, administrators, and parents. Accordingly, districts and schools need to become more proactive by establishing programs that guide and support the students and families through these transitions.

Research demonstrates that high mobility occurs within urban and rural areas. High income, middle income, and low income families move; however, high mobile families are usually migrant families, unemployed, or homeless. In most cases this means urban students. The educator's goal should be to understand and welcome these students and their families into the school making the transition as easy as possible for the student.

CHAPER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research literature supports the claim that highly mobile students experience an interruption of lesson content and social ties, and harbor feelings of isolation. Additionally, the research indicates that it could take a child from 4 to 6 months to recover from a move. By examining the Assessment and Assimilation Program, this study may provide schools with an avenue for highly mobile students to successfully enter a new school and excel.

In 2004, Georgia's population climbed to 8.8 million people making it the ninth largest state populace in the country, an increase from 15th place in 1970. Between 1970 and 2004 the population doubled. According to Glenwood Ross at the Fiscal Research Center, Georgia saw the most growth during the 1990s, adding 1.7 million people, an increase of 25% (p. 8).

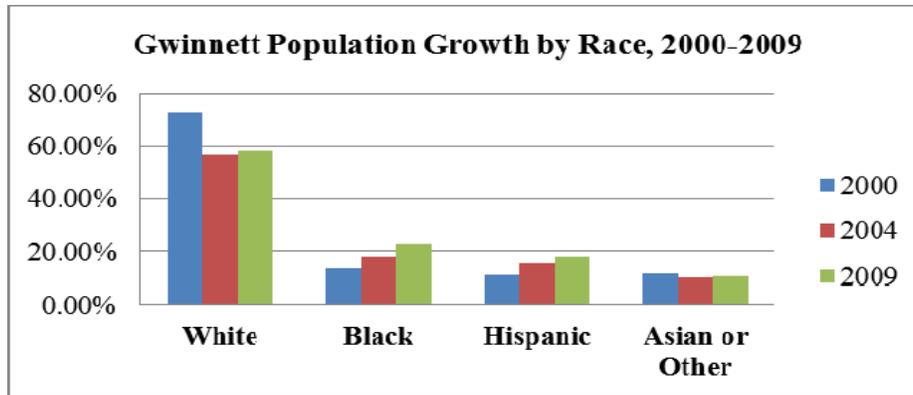
In addition, the report from the Fiscal Research Center shows that Georgia's growth spurt during the 1990s was due to Net Domestic Migration (i.e., immigrants from other states into Georgia minus emigrants from Georgia to other states) ranking Georgia number two after Florida. Most dramatically, by 2003 the Hispanic population in Georgia increased 82% moving the state from 20th to the 10th highest population of Hispanics (p. 4).

The amount of growth in the minority, African American population trails only New York, Florida, and Texas. Based on the 2003 U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 33% of Georgia's population is African American, accounting for 2.5 million of the state's 3 million minorities. In addition, between 1990 and 2003 the Asian population grew by 187%, increasing

from 74,000 to 212,000 making Georgia the 14th largest in this category. Interestingly, with all this growth Georgia's median age is now 33.8 years of age, the fourth youngest state in the Union.

Gwinnett is one of the 10 fastest growing counties in Georgia. Fifty-three percent of Georgia's population can be found in Atlanta's 28 Metropolitan counties, with the bulk of the population living in the 10 close-in, or ARC counties. International migration has played a large part in the growth of the ARC counties, especially Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Cobb County (Ross, 2006).

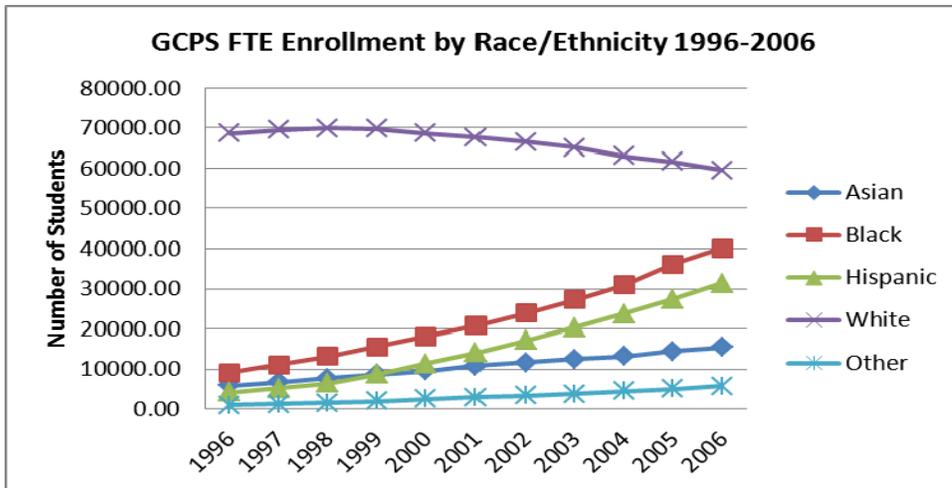
Gwinnett County is over 430 square miles with 15 different municipalities. Based on the 2009 Gwinnett County Population, Households, and Housing Unit Estimates, Gwinnett is the second most populous county in Georgia with approximately 752,800 people. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Gwinnett was listed as one of the fastest growing counties in the country and by the 1990s Gwinnett saw significant increases in its minority population, when the number of African American, Hispanic, and Asian residents quadrupled. In addition to the tremendous growth, Gwinnett's poverty levels more than doubled from 4% in 1989 to 8.4% in 2007 (Housing Stability Count & Survey, 2008).



Note: “Other” includes American Indian/Alaskan Native and multi-racial students.

Figure 3. Gwinnett population growth by race, 2000-2009. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, 2009.)

Between 1996 and 2006, the Gwinnett County Public School District grew from 84,527 students to 144,693 students, 71.2%. In 1996, White students made up 77.4% of GCPS total enrollment; however, by 2006 the number of White students dropped to 39.2%. Black enrollment increased from 10.3% to 26.2% and Hispanic enrollment increased from 5% to 20.6%, with Asian and other enrollment increasing from 7.5% to 14% between 1996 and 2006 (<http://app3.doe.k12.ga.us>).



Note. "Other" includes American Indian/Alaskan Native and multi-racial students.

Figure 4. GCPS full-time enrollment by race/ethnicity 1996-2006. (Source: Georgia Department of Education.)

Table 1

Gwinnett County Public School Full-Time Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 1996-2006

Year	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Other
1996	7.0%	10.3%	5.0%	77.4%	0.5%
2006	10.0%	26.2%	20.6%	39.2%	4.0%

Note. "Other" includes American Indian/Alaskan Native and multi-racial students. (Source: Georgia Department of Education.)

By 2006, 115 languages were spoken among 144,000 GCPS students in 63 elementary schools, 20 middle schools, 16 high schools, and 7 alternative type settings, the largest school system in Georgia. Today the system is considered "majority minority" with 52.37% of the students eligible for free/reduced lunch. The student population consists of 10.2% Asian, 28.6% Black, 25.3% Hispanic, 31.7% White, and 4.0% Other (<http://app3.doe.k12.ga.us>). Additionally, for every 100 students, 24.5% are highly mobile (Gwinnett County Consolidated Plan, 2009-2013).

Best School

Best Middle School is located in the south end of Gwinnett County, an area of high diversity and poverty where the median income is \$57,165 per household (Market Street Services, 2006). The school serves students who live in one of three highly mobile clusters, the Meadowcreek Cluster. In 2004, the year Best Middle School opened, data showed over 3,000 students attended the two elementary schools zoned to feed into Best MS. The population of students in the two schools consisted of 8% Asian, 67% Hispanic, 19% Black, 3% White, and 3% Other. In addition, 85% of the students were eligible for free/reduced lunch. The Meadowcreek Cluster mobility rate was between 40% and 50%, in some cases the rate climbed higher (www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us). It was apparent based on the demographics and mobility rate of the cluster that Best MS students would be highly mobile.

The challenges that come with opening a new school are overwhelming at best and paired with a steady stream of incoming students means additional demands on office staff, teachers, materials, and supplies. Sarah Ewing, a journalist, wrote even the most confident and well-balanced child can have concerns about fitting in, making new friends, and coping with new or different academics. Therefore, before Best MS opened for business Dr. Smith created a position for a certified teacher and assigned the task of developing and implementing a quality program to meet the needs of incoming students and their families.

The goal of the Assessment and Assimilation Program is to focus on building a trusting relationship and recognizing, respecting, and addressing the needs of new students and their families. The program is based on the premise that, the quality of the relationships of the people in the school, and to what extent the people in the school are engaged, determines the level of success that the school will experience (Osterman, 2000).

To accomplish the goal of Assessment and Assimilation, a philosophy of partnership between the student, family, faculty, and staff must be embraced, along with support from the moment the family starts the registration process until assimilation is complete. On August 16, 2004, one week after the 2004-2005 school year start date, Assessment and Assimilation officially began when new families were directed to the Assessment and Assimilation classroom, after completing a registration packet, to receive a Welcome Packet, meet the Assessment and Assimilation teacher, hear information about the school and county, review the student's academic, behavior, and attendance history, and finalize the registration process.

The Assessment and Assimilation Program provides Best MS with an intervention tool for supporting new students, their families, faculty, and staff. The program's components include (1) establishing a relationship and promoting a partnership immediately with new families; (2) taking the burden of the new student off the teachers by reviewing school/county policy, procedures, curriculum, rules, and expectations with new families and by providing the teacher with invaluable information before the student arrives in the classroom; (3) identifying the student's academic, behavioral, and emotional needs, (4) helping the student feel more secure by establishing a meaningful relationship through one-on-one discussions, and (5) collecting and compiling invaluable data.

How a child copes with change can very much depend on the kind of support she or he receives (Family Lives, 2010). This study examined the effect the Assessment and Assimilation Program has had on highly mobile students entering Best Middle School by answering the following research questions: (1) Does the Assessment and Assimilation Program increase highly mobile students' academic achievement as determined by grade point average (GPA), (2) Does the Assessment and Assimilation Program reduce highly mobile student's misbehavior as

determined by student office referrals, and (3) Does the Assessment and Assimilation Program increase highly mobile students' attendance as determined by attendance reports?

Identification and Selection of Participants

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Assessment and Assimilation Program operated from August 16, 2004, until December 15, 2004. Upon returning from winter break in December it was decided to discontinue the program for the remainder of the school year and start it back up the following school year. Because the program was discontinued, it allowed for a treatment group, the 143 highly mobile students who attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program between August 16, 2004, and December 15, 2004, while the 122 highly mobile students who did not attend the Assessment and Assimilation Program between January 3, 2005, and May 25, 2005, served as the control group. Table 2 shows in 2004, 45 sixth graders, 51 seventh graders, and 47 eighth graders entered Best Middle School between August 16, 2004, and December 15, 2004, and in 2005, 41 sixth graders, 50 seventh graders, and 31 eighth graders entered Best Middle School between January 3, 2005, and May 25, 2005.

Instrumentation

To address grades, data for those highly mobile students who registered at Best MS during the 2004-2005 school year were generated from the Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS), "Schools Administrative Student Information System" (SASI). SASI is the program used by GCPS to store student data. Student GPAs for students identified as highly mobile were collected from the SASI program. Student attendance for students identified as highly mobile were collected using Best's archived 15X16 Monthly Attendance Reports generated from the

GCPS School Report Database. Finally, negative referrals for students identified as highly mobile were collected using Best's past and present Administrative Monthly Discipline Report generated for the GCPS School Report Database.

Research Design

This correlational study surveyed the Assessment and Assimilation Program and its association, or relationship to increasing grade point average, improving behavior, and decreasing absences of highly mobile students. A correlational study utilizes a quantitative method of research, examining two or more variables from a group of subjects in order to determine whether a relationship exists.

To increase validity, 30 or more participants should participate in the study. The hypothesis in correlational studies may state that there is a positive correlation (for example, attending Assessment and Assimilation and improved GPA), a negative correlation (for example, not attending assessment and assimilation and low GPA), a perfect correlation ($r = + 1.0$ & $- 1.0$), or no correlation ($r = 0$). Perfect correlations are rare, in most cases the researcher can expect to see correlations less than $+ 1.0$ or $- 1.0$. Correlational studies are generally used for prediction, to support a theory, or to measure test-retest reliability.

Numerical data such as knowledge test scores, academic exams, attendance and behavior reports, surveys, and questionnaires are used in correlational studies. Historical and archival data are also used in correlational studies.

The researcher utilized the highly mobile student's GPA, office referrals, and attendance data from the SASI system at Best MS for the 2004-2005 school year to perform an independent sample t test. An alpha level of .05 was used as a priori. If the Assessment and Assimilation

Program did not significantly increase academic achievement, decrease negative office referrals, and decrease the number of absences of highly mobile students the null hypothesis numbers 1, 2, and 3 were retained. Failure to reject the null hypothesis led the researcher to review the Assessment and Assimilation Program.

If in the case that highly mobile students at Best Middle School showed a significant increase in academic achievement, a decrease in student discipline referrals, and decrease in number of absences, then number 1, 2, and 3 were rejected. The rejection of the null hypothesis supported research that indicates a form of new student orientation for highly mobile students is an effective way to increase academic achievement, decrease student referrals, and increase attendance of highly mobile students.

A series of independent sample *t* test procedures were used to compare the two groups of students, students who attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program, and students who did not attend the program.

Summary

The study examined the effect of implementing the Assessment and Assimilation Program for highly mobile students in a transient middle school. Student GPA, absences, and office referrals were used to determine the effectiveness of the Assessment and Assimilation Program. The control group was highly mobile students entering Best MS between January 3, 2005, and May 25, 2005, who did not attend Assessment and Assimilation. The treatment group was highly mobile students entering Best MS between August 25, 2004, and December 15, 2004, who did attend the Assessment and Assimilation Program. The SASI and SWIS databases were utilized to export student GPA, attendance, and discipline referrals.

CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the Assessment and Assimilation Program for highly mobile middle school students entering Best Middle School during the 2004-2005 school year. The study used data gathered from Gwinnett County's Schools Administrative Student Information System (SASI) to measure any effect the program had on academic performance (improved grades), attendance (increased time in school), and discipline (decrease in negative referrals).

In this chapter I present the findings of these statistical measures. The analysis is divided into three sections: independent-sample *t* tests, two-way contingency table analyses, and multiple regression examinations. The results were then used to answer the following seven research questions.

1. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program affected changes in student achievement as measured by grade point average?
2. What is the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and student achievement (GPA) for gender?
3. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program affected change in the number of student discipline referrals?
4. What is the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and student discipline referrals for gender?

5. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program had an influence on the number of student absences?

6. What was the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and student absences for gender?

7. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program affected changes in student achievement as measured by grade point average after controlling for other variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, free/reduced lunch program, ESOL)?

Two sets of highly mobile students were chosen for the purpose of comparison. The August group entered Best MS in the fall semester of 2004 and attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program; and the January group entered Best MS in the spring semester of 2005 and did not attend the Assessment and Assimilation Program.

Demographic Results

The sample size for this study was 265 highly mobile sixth, seventh, and eighth grade middle school students, including 142 males (54%) and 123 females (46%) who were included in either the August Group or the January Group.

Table 2

Highly Mobile Students by Gender

Gender	August 16, 2004 – December 15, 2004	January 3, 2005 – May 25, 2005
Male	73	69
Female	70	53
Total	143	122

Table 3 presents a numerical breakdown of the 143 sixth, seventh and eighth grade highly mobile students and the 122 sixth, seventh and eighth grade highly mobile students entering Best Middle School between August 16, 2004 and December 15, 2004 (August group) and January 3, 2005 and May 24, 2005 (January group).

Table 3

Highly Mobile Students Entering Best Middle School

Grade	August 16, 2004 – December 15, 2004	January 3, 2005 – May 25, 2005
Sixth	45	41
Seventh	51	50
Eighth	47	31
Total	143	122

The majority of these mobile students were Hispanic, with 75 in the August group and 63 in the January group. African American students followed with 45 in August and 33 in January, Asian with 14 in the August group and 8 in the January group, and finally White, with 4 in August and 13 in January.

Table 4

High Mobile Students by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	August 16, 2004 – December 15, 2004	January 3, 2005 – May 25, 2005
Asian	14	08
African American	45	33
Hispanic	75	63
Mixed	5	5
White	4	13
Total	143	122

Of the 265 highly mobile students entering Best Middle School between August 16, 2004, and December 15, 2004, and January 3, 2005, and May 25, 2005, 192 qualified for the free or reduced lunch program.

Table 5

Highly Mobile Students on Free and Reduced Lunch

Lunch	August 16, 2004 – December 15, 2004	January 3, 2005 – May 25, 2005
Free/Reduced	102	90
No Free/Reduced	41	32
Total	143	122

Students with Disabilities (SWD) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students registering between August 16, 2004, and December 16, 2004, and January 3, 2005, and May 25, 2005, are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Highly Mobile Students with Disabilities (SWD) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

SWD, Gifted, ELL	August 16, 2004 – December 15, 2004	January 3, 2005 – May 25, 2005
SWD	11	14
ELL	35	19
Gifted	1	1
Total	47	34

Statistical Analysis

In order to discuss whether the Assessment and Assimilation Program influenced student outcomes, the following independent variables were considered: Assessment and Assimilation

Program, gender, ethnicity, SWD, ESOL, and students' receiving free/reduced lunch. Dependent variables consisted of grade point average, absences, and discipline referrals. The GPA, total number of absences, and total number of referrals were retrieved from the Schools Administrative Student Information System (SASI) database for the 2004-2005 school year and analyzed.

Research Question 1 Results

Research Question 1 asked, "Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program affected changes in student achievement as measured by grade point average?"

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that students who participated in the Assessment and Assimilation Program have higher academic achievement (GPA) than those students who did not participate in the Assessment and Assimilation Program. Equality of error variances assumption was not violated. The test was statistically significant, $t(263)=-2.64, p = .01$. Students who attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program ($M = 2.72, SD = .74$) on average had a higher GPA than those not involved in the program ($M = 2.49, SD = .72$). However, as shown in Table 7 the strength of the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and academic achievement, as assessed by η^2 , was small, with the involvement in Assessment and Assimilation accounting for 2.6% of the variance of academic achievement (see Table 7).

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for GPA by Group

Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
January	2.4861	.71539	122
August	2.7238	.74436	143
Total	2.6143	.73938	265

Note. $t(263) = -2.64, p = .01$

Research Question 2 Results

Research Question 2 asked, “What is the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and student achievement (GPA) for gender?”

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to examine whether there is a gender difference in GPA for those students who participated in the Assessment and Assimilation Program and those students who did not (see Table 8). Because the homogeneity variances assumption was violated ($F = 4.36, p = .04$), results for unequal variances assumed were reported. The test was statistically significant, $t(247.11) = -2.87, p = .00$. Female students who participated in the Assessment and Assimilation Program ($M = 2.75, SD = .77$) on the average had a higher GPA than male students ($M = 2.49, SD = .69$) who participated in the Assessment and Assimilation Program. However, the strength of the relationship between gender and academic achievement, as assessed by η^2 , was small, with gender accounting for 3.1% of the variance of academic achievement.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that male students who participated in the Assessment and Assimilation Program have a higher GPA than those male students who did not. Equality of error variances assumption was not violated. The test was statistically significant, $t(140) = -3.12, p = .00$. Male students who attended the

Assessment and Assimilation Program ($M = 2.66$, $SD = .74$) on the average had a higher GPA than those male students who did not attend the Assessment and Assimilation Program ($M = 2.31$, $SD = .59$) (see Table 8). However, the strength of the relationship between Assessment and Assimilation and GPA, as assessed by η^2 , was small, with involvement in the Assessment and Assimilation Program accounting for 6.5% of the variance of academic achievement.

The GPA of female students who participated in the Assessment and Assimilation Program ($M = 2.71$, $SD = .80$) was not statistically different from those female students who did not participate in the Assessment and Assimilation Program ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .75$) (see Table 8).

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for GPA by Gender

Gender		Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Male	GPA	Jan	69	2.3130	.58910
		Aug	73	2.6644	.73850
Female	GPA	Jan	53	2.7113	.80352
		Aug	70	2.7857	.75071

Note. Males $t(140) = -3.12$, $p = .00$; Females $t(247.11) = -2.87$, $p = .00$.

In conclusion, an independent sample t test revealed highly mobile students who participated in the Assessment and Assimilation Program accumulated a higher GPA (Grade Point Average) than students who did not participate in the program. The group difference tests also revealed that when comparing male students from the August group to male students from the January group, the August group accumulated a higher GPA, while both August and January female groups revealed no difference.

Research Question 3 Results

Research Question 3 asked, “Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program affected change in the number of student discipline referrals?”

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether discipline referrals were associated with the Assessment and Assimilation Program (see Table 9).

Discipline referrals consist of three levels: 0, 1-3, and more than 4 received. Involvement in the Assessment and Assimilation Program and the number of referrals received were found to be significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2 (2, N = 265) = 18.11, P = .00$, Cramer’s $V = .26$. Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the difference among these proportions (see Table 10). The Holm’s sequential Bonferroni method was used to control for Type I error at the .05 level across all three comparisons. The pairwise difference that was not significant was between the level 1 to 3 referrals and more than 4 referrals. The probability of a student receiving more than 4 referrals was 3.6 times (.18/.05) more likely for students not involved in the Assessment and Assimilation Program. In addition, the probability of a student receiving 1 to 3 referrals was about 1.6 times (.26/.17) more likely for students not involved in the Assessment and Assimilation Program.

Table 9

Analysis of Referrals by Group

		Referrals			Total	
		Never	1 to 3	More than 4		
Group	Jan	Count	68	32	22	122
		% within group	55.7%	26.2%	18.0%	100.0%
	Aug	Count	112	24	7	143
		% within group	78.3%	16.8%	4.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	180	56	29	265
		% within group	67.9%	21.1%	10.9%	100.0%

Note. $\chi^2 (2, N = 265) = 18.11, p = .00$

Table 10

Pairwise Comparison of Group Referrals

Comparison	Pearson chi-square	<i>p</i> value (Alpha)	Cramer's <i>V</i>
0 vs. 1-3	6.56	.01 (.017)	.167
0 vs. more than 4	14.78	.00 (.025)	.266
1-3 vs. more than 4	2.89	.09 (.050)	.184

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether discipline referrals were associated with gender. Discipline referrals and gender were found to be significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2 (2, N = 265) = 10.00, p = .01$, Cramer's $V = .19$ (see Table 11). A follow-up pairwise comparison was conducted to evaluate the difference among these proportions (see Table 12). The Holm's sequential Bonferroni method was used to control for Type I error at the .05 level across all three comparisons. The pairwise difference that was not significant was between receiving 0 referrals and 1 to 3 referrals. The probability of a student receiving more than 4 referrals was about 3.2 times (.16/.05) more likely when students are male.

Table 11

Analysis of Group Referrals by Gender

		Referral			Total	
		Never	1-3	More than 4		
Gender	Male	Count	87	32	23	142
		% within Gender	61.3%	22.5%	16.2%	100.0%
	Female	Count	93	24	6	123
		% within Gender	75.6%	19.5%	4.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	180	56	29	265
		% within Gender	67.9%	21.1%	10.9%	100.0%

Note. $\chi^2 (2, N = 265) = 10.00, p = .01$

Table 12

Pairwise Comparison of Gender Referrals

Comparison	Pearson chi-square	<i>P</i> value (Alpha)	Cramer's <i>V</i>
0 vs. 1-3	1.33	.25 (.017)	.075
0 vs. more than 4	9.61	.00 (.025)	.214
1-3 vs. more than 4	4.11	.04 (.050)	.220

In conclusion, a two-way contingency table analysis revealed highly mobile students who participated in the Assessment and Assimilation Program received fewer referrals than those students who did not participate in the program. In addition, female students received fewer referrals than male students.

Research Question 4 Results

Research Question 4 asked, “What is the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and discipline referrals for gender?”

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that male students who participate in the Assessment and Assimilation Program receive fewer discipline referrals than those male students who did not. Referrals consist of two levels: 0 and 1 or more. The Assessment and Assimilation Program and referrals for male students were found to be significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2 (1, N = 142) = 10.22, p = .00$, Cramer’s $V = .27$.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that female students who participate in the Assessment and Assimilation Program receive fewer referrals than those female students who do not. Referrals consist of two levels: 0 and more than 1. The Assessment and Assimilation Program and referrals for female students were found to be significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2 (1, N = 123) = 10.22, p = .03$, Cramer’s $V = .19$ (see Table 13).

Table 13

Analysis of Group Referrals by Male and Female

Gender				Referral		Total
				Never	At least 1	
Male	Group	Jan	Count	33	36	69
			% within	37.9%	65.5%	48.6%
	Aug	Count	54	19	73	
		% within	62.1%	34.5%	51.4%	
	Total	Count	87	55	142	
		% within	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Female	Group	Jan	Count	35	18	53
			% within	37.6%	60.0%	43.1%
	Aug	Count	58	12	70	
		% within	62.4%	40.0%	56.9%	
	Total	Count	93	30	123	
		% within	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Note. Males $\chi^2 (1, N = 142) = 10.22, P = .00$; Females $\chi^2 (1, N = 123) = 10.22, P = .03$

In conclusion, a two-way contingency table analysis revealed that when comparing highly mobile male and female students from the August group to highly mobile male and female students from the January group, the August group received fewer referrals.

Research Question 5 Results

Research Question 5 asked, “Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program had an influence on the number of student absences?”

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that whether attending the Assessment and Assimilation Program influenced attendance. In terms of statistical analysis, the distribution of the variable is skewed; therefore, attendance consisted of two levels: 0 and 1 or more absences. Involvement in the Assessment and Assimilation Program

and attendance were not significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2 (1, N = 265) = 2.47, p = .16$. Cramer's $V = .09$ (see Table 14).

Table 14

Analysis of Attendance by Group

			Attend		Total
			Never	At least 1	
Group	Jan	Count	43	79	122
		% within group	35.2%	64.8%	100.0%
	Aug	Count	64	79	143
		% within group	44.8%	55.2%	100.0%
Total	Count		107	158	265
	% within group		40.4%	59.6%	100.0%

Note. $\chi^2 (1, N = 265) = 2.47, p = .16$

In conclusion, a two-way contingency table analysis revealed there was no significant difference in attendance between highly mobile students who attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program in the targeted school and those students who did not attend the program.

Research Question 6 Results

Research Question 6 asked, “What is the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and absences for gender?”

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether attending the Assessment and Assimilation Program influenced attendance by gender. The attendance consists of two levels: 0 and 1 or more absences. Gender and attendance were not significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2 (1, N = 265) = 0.11, p = .80$. Cramer's $V = .02$ (see Table 15).

Table 15

Analysis of Group Attendance by Gender

			Attend		Total
			Never	At least 1	
Group	Male	Count	56	86	142
		% within group	39.4%	60.6%	100.0%
	Female	Count	51	72	123
		% within group	41.5%	58.5%	100.0%
Total	Count		107	107	158
	% within group		40.4%	40.4%	59.6%

Note. $\chi^2 (1, N = 265) = 0.11, p = .80$

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that male students who participated in the Assessment and Assimilation Program experienced less absences than those male students who did not. The absences consist of two levels: 0 absences and 1 or more. The Assessment and Assimilation Program and absences for male students were not significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2 (1, N = 142) = .58, p = .45$, Cramer's $V = .06$ for male (see Table 16).

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that female students who participated in the Assessment and Assimilation Program experienced less absences than those female students who did not. The absences consist of two levels: 0 absences and 1 or more. The Assessment and Assimilation Program and absences for female students were not significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2 (1, N = 123) = 2.16, p = .14$, Cramer's $V = .13$ for female (see Table 16).

Table 16

Analysis of Group Attendance by Male and Female

Gender				Attend		Total
				Never	At least 1	
Male	Group	Jan	Count	25	44	69
			% within	44.6%	51.2%	48.6%
		Aug	Count	31	42	73
			% within	55.4%	48.8%	51.4%
	Total		Count	56	86	142
			% within	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Female	Group	Jan	Count	18	35	53
			% within	35.3%	48.6%	43.1%
		Aug	Count	33	37	70
			% within	64.7%	51.4%	56.9%
	Total		Count	51	72	123
			% within	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Males $\chi^2 (1, N = 142) = .58, p = .45$; *Females* $\chi^2 (1, N = 123) = 2.16, p = .14$

In conclusion, a two-way contingency table analysis revealed there is no difference in attendance between highly mobile students who participated in the targeted school's Assessment and Assimilation Program when grouped by gender. In addition, a two-way contingency table analysis revealed that when comparing the attendance for highly mobile male and female students from the August group to highly mobile male and female students from the January group, no significant difference emerged.

Research Question 7 Results

Research Question 7 asked, "Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program affected changes in student achievement as measured by grade point average after controlling for other variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, free/reduced lunch program, ESOL)?"

Examined first was whether the assumptions of linearity, homogeneity, and normality were violated, indicating that no serious violation of assumptions existed. In the multiple regression analysis, the model accounted for 11.5 % of the variance in the GPA ($R^2 = .12$, adjusted $R^2 = .09$, $p = .00$). Scores for GPA were statistically significantly related by gender, ESOL students, and referrals. The beta for gender, ESOL students, and referrals variables were statistically significant ($\beta = 0.16$, $t = 2.60$, $p = .01$; $\beta = 0.13$, $t = 2.14$, $p = .03$; $\beta = -0.18$, $t = 2.79$, $p = .01$). More specifically, the gender slope coefficient is .23. Therefore, when controlling for the other variables, we expect that on average female students have .23 higher scores for GPA than males. The ESOL students' slope coefficient is .25. Therefore, when controlling for other variables, we expect ESOL students to have .25 higher scores for GPA than their counterpart. The referral slope coefficient is -.28. Thus, we expect a student who received at least more than one referral is .282 lower on scores for GPA when accounting for other variables (see Table 17).

Table 17

Multiple Regressions for Study Variables on GPA

Variables	B	SEB	β	t-value	p
Constant	2.44	.13		18.61	.00
Gender	.23	.09	.16	2.60	.01
Grade 6	.15	.11	.09	1.43	.16
Grade 8	-.02	.11	-.01	-.16	.88
ESOL Program	.25	.12	.13	2.14	.03
Group	.15	.09	.09	1.62	.11
Referral Bi	-.28	.10	-.18	-2.79	.01
Attend Bi	.03	.09	.02	.35	.73
Free/Reduced Lunch	-.05	.11	-.03	-.48	.63

In conclusion, when controlling for other variables, GPA is associated with the Assessment and Assimilation Program, gender, and referral status. However, standardized beta coefficients (β) indicate that the effects of these variables on GPA were not practically high (e.g., $\beta < .3$).

Summary

The results of this study indicate that the Assessment and Assimilation Program is positively correlated to supporting highly mobile students entering a new school by increasing academic achievement (GPA) and decreasing discipline referrals. Additionally, the study indicates there is no correlation between highly mobile students attending the Assessment and Assimilation Program and increased attendance.

Even though the strength of the relationship was small, the results of the study do provide evidence supporting the value of the Assessment and Assimilation Program. Moreover, while the results of the study are correlational, not causal, they provide proof that highly mobile students can profit from special attention when entering a new school. In addition, this result justifies a more detailed microanalysis of the dynamics of the Assessment and Assimilation Program in terms of the perceptions and motivations of participating students.

While the results of this study show that highly mobile students who attend a supportive orientation program may be relevant to increasing GPA and decreasing referrals, there is another factor to consider. Even if attending the Assessment and Assimilation Program increases GPA and decreases negative referrals, the effects of moving and entering a new school cannot be eliminated. I will discuss these and final implications in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the Assessment and Assimilation Program for highly mobile middle school students entering Best Middle School. Student mobility is defined as the process of moving from one school to another for reasons other than promotion. Students of high mobility are those students who move six or more times during their school career.

In the study, student data from Best's highly mobile students (transcripts, discipline reports, and attendance reports) were used to measure the relationship between academic performance (improved grades), attendance (increased time in school), and discipline (decrease in negative referrals) after attending the Assessment and Assimilation Program. The following research questions were explored:

1. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program affected changes in student achievement as measured by grade point average?
2. What is the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and student achievement (GPA) for gender?
3. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program affected change in the number of student discipline referrals?
4. What is the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and student discipline referrals for gender?

5. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program had an influence on the number of student absences?

6. What was the relationship between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and student absences for gender?

7. Has the Assessment and Assimilation Program affected changes in student achievement as measured by grade point average after controlling for other variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, free/reduced lunch program, ESOL)?

Summary of Findings

For the purpose of analysis, the data were arranged into six groups: male and female (August group), male and female (January group), two female (August group and January group) and two male (August group and January group). Of the four gender groups, three (August male and female, and January male) were similar in size. The August male group contained 73 students and the female group contained 70 students, while the January male group contained 69 students. The only group not similar was the January female group, which was significantly smaller than the others, containing 53 students. The first descriptive analysis by groups indicated that the August group, the group that attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program accumulated a higher GPA and had fewer referrals than the January group, the group that did not attend the program.

When accounting for unequal variances on the group difference test, results revealed that female students who participated in the Assessment and Assimilation Program on average had a higher GPA than male students who attended the program. In addition, male students who attended the program realized a significant positive correlation resulted in their GPA, as opposed

to the GPA for those male students who did not attend the program. Surprisingly, there was no difference in GPA results between female students who did and those who did not attend the Assessment and Assimilation Program.

Due to the correlational design of the study and the fact that only one year of data was utilized, it is difficult to infer causality from the results. However, this study does provide evidence that the Assessment and Assimilation Program is positively correlated with improved grade point average and decreased negative referrals. As hypothesized, looking at GPA and referrals by group and gender indicates that highly mobile students who attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program were positively impacted. Indeed, the relationship between the program, GPA, and referrals remained strong after accounting for the effects of gender. However, the Assessment and Assimilation Program does not appear to be a mitigating factor for attendance.

Students who move frequently may fail to learn basic concepts needed to successfully move from one grade to the next. Because highly mobile students enter classrooms at various times of the year they may possibly miss crucial academic instruction, most importantly math and reading. Kerbow, Azcoitia, and Buell (2003) suggested that each time a child moves the recovery time takes longer, putting the student at an academic disadvantage.

Over the last decade, the responsibility of welcoming and incorporating new students into the school has fallen upon the classroom teacher who has very little time to thoroughly understand the academic needs of the new student. Even if the student comes to the teacher with a current portfolio of work samples, grades, and test scores, assimilating the student still falls on the teacher. Kerbow et al. (2003) stated additional support, such as initial assessments that are in line with the school's curriculum, would allow for identification of and a plan to address the

mobile student's weaknesses. Such support would be in addition to basic classroom instruction (Kerbow et al., 2003).

Referral data were separated into three levels (0, 1-3, and more than 4 referrals) and new binary and multinomial variables for referrals and attendance were created because they were too skewed to use in a statistical method requiring normal assumption. Then, a contingency analysis was conducted, a kind of nonparametric test to determine the correlation between discipline referrals and the Assessment and Assimilation Program. In addition to the analysis of descriptive, pairwise comparisons were conducted controlling for Type I error at the .05 level across all three comparisons.

When comparing female and male groups, female students received fewer referrals than males. In order to compare referral data by gender, the data were separated into two levels (0 and 1 or more referrals) and again a two-way contingency analysis was conducted along with pairwise comparisons on both male and female students. Interestingly, the correlation was positive for both genders. Males who attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program received fewer referrals than their counterparts, while females who attended the program also had fewer referrals.

Research suggests that highly mobile students have a difficult time making new friends, adjusting to their surroundings, comprehending new curriculum, learning new rules, and meeting new teachers (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). Because highly mobile students expect to move they hesitate to invest themselves in both peer and adult relationships. In an action research study addressing teacher views about the benefits of the Assessment and Assimilation Program, teachers at Best MS stated that in some cases new students enter their classroom "with a real attitude." One teacher wrote, "I think that many times my new students' discipline problems are

brought on by the belief that they would be moving soon” (Power, 2006). Sanderson (2003) concurs, mobile children feel unstable and may enter a new school with a type of fight or flight attitude.

When a new student exhibits negative and hostile feelings, districts and schools should have procedures in place to determine what type of intervention should be implemented. If the negativity is due to skill deficiencies (cognitive, social, emotional, language, or functional), interventions must be introduced that minimize attention and support a positive attitude (Popp, 2004).

The results of attendance were disappointing, but not a surprise. Due to the skewed distribution of the variable, the data consisted of two levels (0 and 1 or more absences). When compared by group and gender there was no significant relationship.

Attendance has been found to strongly predict student performance. Research from the Kids Mobility Project found highly mobile students often struggle with low attendance rates and low achievement. On average, highly mobile students, students who moved three or more times, scored 20 points lower than stable students (Kids Mobility Project, 1998).

When looking at the results of this study, one has to wonder why the Assessment and Assimilation Program had no effect on attendance? Could it be that attendance is driven more by parents and less by programs? In a study conducted by Sheldon and Epstein (2002), *Getting Students to School: Using Family and Community Involvement to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism*, data were collected on the effects of using parent and community involvement to reduce student absences. Results showed a significant decrease in absences when schools communicated with parents, involved parents, educated parents, and celebrated decreased absences with students and

their families. Today schools are recognizing the family as an important resource, as well as influential in reducing truancy and chronic absenteeism. Sheldon and Epstein (2002) stated,

When educators work with families to get students to school every day and on time, these efforts appear to be successful. Therefore, in schools where students have attendance problems educators may need to go beyond the school building to involve families in reducing absenteeism. (p. 53)

The final step of this study was to conduct a multiple regression analysis to show the relationship, if any between the Assessment and Assimilation Program and GPA when controlling for gender, ESOL, and referrals. Due to the nature of the variables, analysis could not be completed for ethnicity, free/reduced lunch, gifted, and Students with Disabilities.

Grade point average scores for female students who attended the program continued to be significantly higher than male students, while GPA for ESOL students were higher than English speaking students. Furthermore, GPA for those students who received no referrals was significantly higher than the students who received one or more referrals. Even though the standardized beta coefficients (β) indicated that the effects of the variables on GPA were not high (e.g., $\beta < .3$), when controlling for other variables the study indicates of those highly mobile students who attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program during the 2004-2005 school year the highest impacted were female ESOL students with no referrals.

Implications

The findings of this study imply that a new student orientation program such as Assessment and Assimilation should be a part of the registration process. The question of how or who creates and sustains the program must be considered by the individual school or district. At Best Middle School the new student orientation program has achieved and sustained its success over the last 7 years and the program is worthy of replication.

While the data do not contain a large enough sample of students with special needs to examine the effects of the Assessment and Assimilation Program, highly mobile special education students are more likely to experience a difficult time fitting in, adjusting to the curriculum, and attending school daily. Therefore, future research should examine a larger sample size of highly mobile students with disabilities GPA, referrals, and attendance once they have completed Assessment and Assimilation and are placed in class.

Furthermore, even though this was not a focus of this study, the positive effect of the Assessment and Assimilation Program on both genders is of critical importance for all stakeholders. Equally important is the effect the program has on female students. Along with improved grades and a decrease in discipline referrals, the results of the study showed that Caucasian, African American, and Asian female students who attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program outperformed the male students who did and did not attend the program.

This study thus makes a contribution by showing the differential effect of the program by gender. As a result, future research should analyze the effects of a new student orientation program on highly mobile students by gender--a question not considered in the research literature.

Demographic Findings

The study was conducted to evaluate the effects of a program designed to support highly mobile students transitioning into a new school. Out of the study came evidence that highly mobile students who attend a new student orientation before being placed in a classroom or schedule can experience increased academic performance and have fewer social and emotional problems. Could the answer to high mobility be as simple as providing new students and families

a warm and inviting place to fill out required registration documents and a friendly person to gather important information, while explaining policies and procedures of the school?

According to the results of the study, the 143 students who attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program, on average, had a higher GPA than the 122 students who did not attend. Furthermore, when testing for gender difference in GPA for those students who did and did not participate in the program, on average female students experienced a higher GPA than male students. Research shows that mobility is negatively related to academic achievement; however, there is little research to support the effects of a new student welcome, or orientation program, especially by gender.

The results of this study clearly demonstrated the positive correlation between attending the Assessment and Assimilation Program and decreasing discipline referrals. According to the data, students who did not attend the program before being placed in a schedule or classroom were 1.6 times more likely to receive 1 to 3 referrals, while the probability of a student receiving more than 4 referrals was 3.6 times more likely when students did not attend the program. When controlling for variables to determine whether discipline referrals were associated by gender, the results showed that 0 referrals and 1 to 3 referrals were significantly related, while male students were 3.3 times more likely to receive more than 4 referrals.

Finally, the data showed no correlation between student absences and attending the Assessment and Assimilation Program and when controlling for variables, again the data showed gender and attendance was not significantly related. Although there is little research to support what effects a new student program has on mobile students, families, and mobility the schools and districts that have implemented new student orientation programs suggest that programs such as Assessment and Assimilation can help reduce unnecessary mobility and its harmful effects.

Conclusion

Informal intake programs like the Assessment and Assimilation Program, better known as “triage,” for both new students and their families are slowly evolving in schools and school districts across the country. Based on a comprehensive study completed by the federal government in 1996 on the negative effects of mobility, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 cited mobility as one of the determining factors of achievement and mandated that each state include adjustments for mobility in their accountability models (Rhodes, 2005).

Student mobility refers to students who make non-promotional school changes. Students who are highly mobile are defined by six or more non-promotional school moves during their school career. Approximately 20% of Americans move each year and somewhere between 15% and 20% of American children change schools yearly (Martin, 2002; Rumberger, 2003; Sanderson, 2003). Unemployment, job relocation, eviction, domestic issues, better living conditions, and landlord problems are all reasons for a move and they are reasons that schools cannot control.

Studies on student mobility have primarily focused on the extent of student issues in schools; issues that include the impact of mobility on student academic achievement, discipline, attendance, social adjustment, as well as the effects of mobility on the entire school. However, limited research has focused on other reasons given for moving such as dissatisfaction with the current school, poor or adverse communication with teachers and administrators, negative feelings about discipline, special education issues, or non-supportive and uncaring climate, which many times are behind the parents’ decision to change schools (Fisher et al., 2002). According to Mansour’s study (as cited in Rhodes, 2005) parents are reluctant, especially parents

of poverty, to talk about the issues with school personnel; therefore, teachers and administrators may never know the true reason behind this type of move.

Improving the school's culture and climate to ensure new students and their families feel safe and welcome is key to beginning a strong relationship between the student, family, and school. Maslow theorized that basic needs must be met before higher level needs can be fulfilled. In order for highly mobile students to begin the process of learning they must be made to feel that their emotional needs, safety, security, and belonging are met (Popp, 2004).

Policy Considerations

In some cases, mobility is initiated by parents or guardians to serve their own purpose, fulfill a need, or send their children to a school of preference. For others mobility is a result of a decision to change jobs or residences, or stems from a change in the family, such as divorce, marriage, and remarriage. To make matters worse, over the last decade 42% of mobile students reported they moved from school to school out of concern for their safety, or in search of a higher quality education (Gasper, DeLuca, & Estacion, 2009). Finally, schools also contribute to the issue of mobility by transferring students under the guise of overcrowding, redistricting, social, or academic concerns.

Implementing an educational program that addresses highly mobile families, informing them of the negative effects of mobility is one of the simplest and most effective strategies a school could use to reduce mobility and improve the overall climate, culture, and quality of the school (Rumberger, 2003). While my findings do not explain how a new student orientation program leads to increased academic achievement and decreased discipline referrals of highly mobile students, the data do suggest there is a need for future research.

Based on the current trends and the research discoveries in this study, my findings specifically speak to the seven policy proposals below.

1. Districts and schools that focus on the patterns of mobility have found that a large number of students are moving from one school to another within the district. With this in mind districts could change policy and allow for students moving within the district to remain in their school of origination for the remainder of the year. Because the faculty and staff at Best Middle School understand that students need stability, every effort is made to keep students at the school when they relocate within the county.

2. Districts with policies and procedures requiring schools to make adjustments to meet the needs of mobile students and their families create a reason for the family to stay at the school. Mobile students and their families are genuinely grateful for the Assessment and Assimilation Program at Best Middle School. The program provides an opportunity for the student and family to develop a trusting relationship, make connections, and to understand the expectations.

3. Districts that have put various types of systems in place that allow for the sharing of information between schools, state they are better able to place mobile students more accurately in classrooms and schedules. For example, portfolio assessments, discipline information, and attendance history. Since Gwinnett County acquired the software to store student data, grades, test scores, attendance records, discipline, and medical information, and share the information with other schools in the county, student placement has become quicker and more accurate.

4. Policies requiring high mobility schools to have some type of new student orientation procedures in place create an opportunity for collaboration between schools when students transfer within the district. The Assessment and Assimilation Program provides the Assessment

and Assimilation facilitator an opportunity to get to know the mobile student and family.

Therefore, when or if the new student moves to another school, valuable information is not lost, instead the facilitator can contact the school and provide them with current and important information.

5. New student orientation programs remove the responsibility of welcoming, assessing, and identifying social, emotional, and academic needs of the mobile student. The time it takes for a teacher to assimilate a new student is time that should be devoted to instruction. District and school policies that require established procedures for assessing and identifying mobile students' weaknesses, gaps, and other issues before placing the student in a classroom or schedule not only meets the needs of the incoming student, but supports and protects the teacher and the classroom. Once the registration process begins at Best Middle School the student enters the Assessment and Assimilation Program. The program's design takes the responsibility of developing the initial relationship, determining the student's academic needs, and assimilating the student into the school.

6. Policies requiring standardized curriculum across districts ensures that students moving within the district do not experience gaps in learning. Today's attempts at state standards, parent involvement, and focus on core curriculum make it easier for highly mobile students if they are changing to one of the 47 states participating in the Common Core State Standards Curriculum. Georgia is one of the 47 states participating in the Common Core Standards Curriculum making it easier for students to transfer within the state and from state to state.

7. New student orientation offers schools an opportunity to counsel students and parents about the pitfalls of mobility and to encourage them to remain in the same school if at all

possible. Policies requiring an orientation facilitator, counselor, administrator, or teacher to meet with students and families prior to a student's departure provides an opportunity to review possible options that may lead to the student staying until year end (for example, using public transportation or another family member to transport the student). The Assessment and Assimilation Program provides the platform for discussions with families regarding the negative effects of mobility, along with possible options if the family finds they need to relocate.

Suggestions for Future Research

High mobility in low socioeconomic schools has continued to increase at an alarming rate over the last decade (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). This study focuses on a new student orientation program that addresses the needs of highly mobile students as they enter school. The results indicate that students who attend a new student orientation experience a higher GPA and receive fewer referrals than students who do not attend a new student orientation program. Additionally, the research suggested that the Assessment and Assimilation Program had no effect on the attendance of highly mobile students.

One limitation of my study was the age of the data. Because I was limited to gathering data from one school, the only data available were from mobile students who attended the program the first year the school opened. Another limitation was the mobile students who attended the program the first year not only had to adjust to the impact of their own move, but they had to deal with a student body that was adjusting to being moved from Best Middle School's sister school.

With this in mind, there is a need to repeat this kind of quantitative study in a school with a more grounded population. There is also a need for a case study that includes interviews,

observations, and surveys, with a focus on the student and family from the time they enter the school and engage in the Assessment and Assimilation Program through completion of the program. In addition, with no chance that mobility is going away, future researchers should direct more studies on the various programs and methods schools and districts across the United States are using to assimilate highly mobile students.

Based on this study, females out-performed males in every category, GPA, behavior, and attendance. Other studies indicate highly mobile females out-score highly mobile males in reading achievement (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). Based on this knowledge, further studies are needed when considering the relationship between gender status and school achievement, negative behavior, and school attendance.

A third limitation to the study was the number of students in both groups. The data used for the research were from those who attended the Assessment and Assimilation Program between August 16, 2004, and December 15, 2004, and those who did not attend the program between January 3, 2005, and May 25, 2005. Future research should explore a longer timeframe, using more students. This would allow for more variable comparisons and give the study more validity.

A final limitation, the data used for the study were collected during the program's infancy. The Assessment and Assimilation Program was designed and implemented in August, 2004. Many changes and adjustments have been made to the program based on the data collected over the last 7 years. Future research on the program would provide a clearer and more valid picture of the impact the program has on mobile students, specifically by gender.

Table 18

Table of Significance

	Aug. Group AA	Jan. Group No AA
GPA	Sig. Higher (M = 2.72, SD = .74)	(M = 2.49, SD = .72)
Referrals (0)	Sig. Higher (78.3%)	55.70%
Referrals (1-3)	Sig. Lower (16.8%)	26.20%
Referrals (4+)	Sig. Lower (4.9%)	
Attendance (0)	No Sig. Difference (44.8%)	
Attendance (at least 1)	No Sig. Difference (55.2%)	

	Gender Group Males	Gender Group Females
GPA	Sig. Higher (M = 2.49, SD = .69)	Sig. Higher (M = 2.75, SD = .77)
Referrals (0)	61.30%	Sig. Higher (75.6%)
Referrals (1-3)	22.50%	Sig. Lower (19.5%)
Referrals (4+)	16.20%	Sig. Lower (4.9%)
Attendance (0)	No Sig. Difference (39.4%)	No Sig. Difference (41.5%)
Attendance (at least 1)	No Sig. Difference (60.6%)	No Sig. Difference (58.5%)

	August Gender Group (Males) AA	January Gender Group (Males) No AA
GPA	Sig. Higher (M = 2.66, SD = .74)	(M = 2.31, SD = .59)
Referrals (0)	Sig. Lower (62.1%)	37.90%
Referrals (at least 1)	Sig. Lower (34.5%)	65.50%
Attendance (0)	No Sig. Difference (55.4%)	44.60%
Attendance (at least 1)	No Sig. Difference (48.8%)	51.20%

	Aug. Gender Group (Females) AA	Jan. Gender Group (Females) No AA
GPA	Sig. Higher (M = 2.71, SD = .80)	37.60%
Referrals (0)	Sig. Lower (62.4%)	37.60%
Referrals (at least 1)	Sig. Lower (40.0%)	60.00%
Attendance (0)	No Sig. Difference (64.7%)	35.30%
Attendance (at least 1)	No Sig. Difference (51.4%)	48.60%

Note. ESOL Group that attended AA had higher GPA than English Group. AA students with zero referrals had significantly higher GPA than students with one or more referrals. Highest impact of program was seen with ESOL female students with zero referrals

In sum, I got a statically significant difference between the August group (attended Assessment and Assimilation) and the January group (did not attend Assessment and Assimilation) in GPA without controlling for covariates (e.g., gender, ell, etc).

To test for referrals and attendance I created a new binary and multinomial variable because they were too skewed to use a statistical method requiring normal assumption. Instead, I

conducted a contingency analysis, a kind of nonparametric test. The results showed an association between attending the Assessment and Assimilation Program and decreased referrals; however, there was no relationship between attending the Assessment and Assimilation Program and improved attendance. Furthermore, I found that gender, Assessment and Assimilation, and referrals are associated with each other.

Finally, I conducted a multiple regression analysis where the outcome is GPA and the independent variables are referrals, attendance, gender, ESOL, and free/reduced lunch. Some covariates are significantly related to GPA; however, the Assessment and Assimilation Program was not related to GPA. This model has a weak explanation, which means that the covariates are not highly associated with GPA.

Summary

Mobility creates many challenges for students, teachers, schools, and parents. This type of change can cause disruption and add to existing challenges for students with limited English, special education students, and students of poverty, further making learning and academic achievement more difficult. When children change schools for reasons other than promotion, failure becomes a greater possibility. Literature documents the positive relationship between school stability and academic achievement, less discipline, and better attendance. However, little research exists on the impact of programs or methods that welcome and nurture highly mobile students. The results of this study indicate that new student orientations, such as the Assessment and Assimilation Program, can improve a highly mobile student's academic achievement and decrease discipline issues.

Furthermore, the research suggests that female ESOL students receive the highest benefit of a new student orientation program followed by male ESOL students, then female and male regular education students. As educational institutions struggle to adopt reforms and improve test scores, educational leaders can take steps to call for the implementation of some form of new student orientation program that meet the needs of individual schools, thus taking steps to increase student performance. If that seems impossible, then schools and districts need to be proactive and take steps to implement a new student orientation program where mobile students are taught strategies to help them adjust to their new school and to quickly provide the educational, emotional, and social support that these students and their families may need.

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APPENDIX A
AKS/PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK



APPENDIX B
STUDENT AGENDA

FEB • 17

RESPECT

S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19
20 21 22 23 24 25 26
27 28

- Treat others with respect, follow the Golden Rule • Be tolerant of differences • Use good manners, not bad language • Be considerate of the feelings of others • Don't threaten, hit, or hurt anyone • Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements



Ernie was not only a gentleman, he was a gentle man. -John Brown, Davis former Syracuse teammate

Ernie Davis (1939 - 1963)

Ernie Davis rose from poverty to become a football superstar. A high school All-American, he was recruited by over 30 colleges - something unheard of during an era when few scholarships were offered to black athletes. Settling on Syracuse University, Davis continued to trample the racial barriers of his time by becoming the first African American to win the coveted Heisman Trophy and to be an NFL first-round draft pick. Sadly, before he could join the Cleveland Browns and play his first professional game, he succumbed to leukemia.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT: www.biography.com

WEEKLY GOALS

Blank lines for weekly goals.

MONDAY

21

Blank lines for Monday.

EVENING PLANNING

Blank lines for evening planning on Monday.

TUESDAY

22

Blank lines for Tuesday.

EVENING PLANNING

Blank lines for evening planning on Tuesday.

CHARACTER TRAIT OF THE PILLAR RESPECT: COURTESY - BE CIVIL TO EVERYONE

Ernie Davis was known as a hard-working and modest man who never put down anyone else. As his fame grew, he remained grounded and courteous to everyone. He even went out of his way to be civil to his opponents. As recalled by his Syracuse coach, Ben Schwartzwalder, "Oh, he'd knock you down, but then he'd run back and pick you up."

WEDNESDAY

23

Blank lines for Wednesday.

EVENING PLANNING

Blank lines for evening planning on Wednesday.

THURSDAY

24

Blank lines for Thursday.

EVENING PLANNING

Blank lines for evening planning on Thursday.

FRIDAY

25

Blank lines for Friday.

EVENING PLANNING

Blank lines for evening planning on Friday.

LESSON: It is a widely held belief that in order to get respect, you must first give it. What does this mean to you? How can being civil to everyone be a step forward in earning more respect from your peers?

SATURDAY

26

Blank lines for Saturday.

SUNDAY

27

Blank lines for Sunday.

APPENDIX C
NEW STUDENT INFORMATION FORM

**Attach form to new student folder*

Date: _____ HR Teacher: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Parents/Guardian: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Cell Phone: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Previous School: _____ Grade: _____

Student Information:

1. _____ Registration (Cum folder and/or Withdrawal)
2. _____ Student Packet (Agenda; Student/Parent Handbook; Promotion Requirements; Attendance Requirements; Dress Code Policy; Cell Phone Policy; Grading Scale)
3. _____ School Tour
4. _____ Class Schedule
5. _____ Bus Route Information

Parent Involvement Information:

Supplemental Educational Services: If Applicable

1. _____ LRMS Title I School Compact
2. _____ LRMS Parent Involvement Policy
3. _____ LRMS Parent Involvement Action Plan
4. _____ GCPS Title I Parent Handbook

1. _____ AYP Letter/Brochure
2. _____ SES Application/Brochure
3. _____ SES Provider Directory

Assessments:

1. _____ % LA Pre-Assessment
2. _____ % MA Pre-Assessment (Big 20)

Services: If Applicable

_____ SST (ASAP) _____ SST (Possible) _____ Placement Conference

Correspondence: If Applicable

_____ Parent letter _____ Parent Conference _____ Parent Phone Conference

Comments: _____
