

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL  
SENIORS AND HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS PARTICIPATING IN A MULTI-YEAR,  
LOOPING, SCHOOL-BASED MENTORING PROGRAM

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to family. First to my husband, Brandon, who continued to support me through this entire process. I appreciate all of your encouragement and support through the years with my goal to obtain my doctorate.

And to my children, Elsie and Caden, who always talk about their mom working on becoming a doctor in education.

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## ABSTRACT

Researchers have indicated that secondary school students were more likely to be truant than primary school students which lead to students dropping out of school and becoming less productive citizens as adults. Researchers have also shown that participation in a school-based mentoring program can positively influence the students and help them make better life decisions. The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program has on the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rate of high school seniors at a rural high school in west Georgia. The researcher conducted a mixed methods study to analyze the relationship between a high school with a mentoring program and a high school without a mentoring program through attendance data, behavior data, test score data, and graduation percentage. For the quantitative portion, attendance data, behavior data, test score data, and graduation percentage were obtained and analyzed using descriptive statistics and *t*-tests. The overall findings were in favor of the school without the mentoring program or not statistically significant. For the qualitative portion, six individual teacher interviews were conducted at the school with the mentoring program to obtain data on their perception of the impact the mentoring program had on high school seniors. The overall findings were positive teacher perceptions of their impact on student attendance, behavior, test scores, and graduation. The mentoring program did not statistically impact student attendance, behavior, test scores, and graduation; however, the relationships and impact that the teachers had on the students could impact the students well into their futures.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT.....iii

DEDICATION.....iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....v

ABSTRACT.....vi

LIST OF TABLES.....ix

LIST OF FIGURES .....x

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ..... 1

    Statement of the Problem.....7

    Research Questions.....8

    Conceptual Framework.....10

    Significance of the Study.....11

    Procedures.....11

    Limitations/Delimitations .....13

    Definition of Terms.....13

    Summary.....15

II. LITERATURE REVIEW .....17

    Mentoring Programs .....17

        Teachers as Advisors .....17

        Impact on Students.....19

    Poverty.....21

        Rural Schools.....21

        Student Attendance.....24

        Student Achievement.....24

        Student Behavior.....25

        Beyond High School.....26

    Parental Support.....27

        Homeless.....27

        Single Parent Homes.....28

        Multi-Generational Homes .....28

    Truancy .....29

        Classification.....29

        Impact on Student.....30

    School .....31

	Culture/Climate.....	31
	Other Ways to Promote Attendance .....	32
	Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports.....	32
	Check & Connect.....	33
	Concept Analysis Chart .....	35
	Summary .....	36
III.	METHODOLOGY .....	38
	Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	38
	Research Design.....	41
	Population and Participants .....	41
	Instrumentation .....	42
	Data Collection and Analysis.....	44
	Reporting the Data .....	45
	Summary .....	46
IV.	REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS .....	47
	Research Design.....	47
	Participant Descriptions .....	48
	Findings.....	49
	Research Question 1 .....	49
	Research Question 2 .....	53
	Summary .....	59
V.	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	62
	Summary .....	62
	Analysis of Research Findings.....	64
	Discussion of Research Findings .....	66
	Limitations .....	72
	Implications for Practice .....	72
	Recommendations for Future Research .....	73
	Conclusion .....	74
	Concluding Thoughts.....	75
	REFERENCES .....	76
	APPENDICES .....	83
	Appendix A. Informed Consent Form .....	84
	Appendix B. Interview Protocol Form.....	86

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Rural Education Information for Georgia.....22

Table 2. Demographic data for School A and School B.....42

Table 3. Demographic data for Seniors at School A and School B.....48

Table 4. Measures of Dispersion of the Number of Absences for High School Seniors..51

Table 5. Measures of Dispersion of the Number of Behavior Referrals for High School Seniors.....52

Table 6. Measures of Dispersion of the Georgia Milestones Economics Test Score for High School Seniors .....53

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Graduation Rates for High School Seniors.....53



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The relationship between the high school with the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program, the high school without any mentoring program, and attendance, behavior, test scores, and graduation rate. ....	10
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Truancy, usually more than five unexcused absences during a school year, was a major issue that the United States and other countries around the world were encountering with their students (Flaherty, Sutphen, & Ely, 2012; Kearney, 2008; Maynard, McCrea, Pigott, & Kelly, 2012; Truancy-prevention.org, n.d.). Many different factors, inside and outside of school, impacted students and caused them to be truant (Lampley & Johnson, 2010; Nolan, Cole, Wroughton, Clayton-Code, & Riffe, 2012; Teasley, 2004). Common factors that impacted students and influenced truancy were developmental issues, ethnic minority status, socio-economic status, lack of family and parental support, neighborhood and community impact, personal choices, and school experiences (Lampley & Johnson, 2010; Nolan et al., 2012; Teasley, 2004).

Students who were truant were more likely to have a negative impact on their peers and community (Maynard, Tyson-McCrea, Pigott, & Kelly, 2011). Also, these students were more likely to struggle with academic achievement due to the number of absences they accumulated during a school year (Flaherty et al., 2012; Gage, Sugai, Lunde, & DeLoreto, 2013). Also, student achievement had a direct correlation with attendance; higher numbers of absences resulted in lower student achievement (Flaherty, et al., 2012; Gage et al., 2013). Students who were classified as chronically truant in primary school were more likely to struggle academically throughout their entire education career (Reid, 2012). When mentoring relationships were formed between an adult and a struggling student, this relationship resulted in a decrease in the likelihood of

these students becoming truant and even encouraged some students to attend college or a career technical school (Gage et al., 2013; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011).

When mentoring programs were established for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and teachers during school hours, the teachers positively impacted students by helping the students increase their social skills and achievement (Clarke, 2009; Gordon, Downey, & Bangert, 2013; Lampley & Johnson, 2010; Toms & Stuart, 2014). Mentoring programs were a positive influence from which all students could benefit because students who participated in mentoring programs were more likely to have a decrease in the number of behavioral referrals, an increase in professional relationships with teachers, and an increase in academic achievement. Also, mentoring programs were found to have an influence on building positive relationships between students and their parents (Chan et al., 2013; Clarke, 2009; Gordon et al., 2013; Sánchez, Esparza, & Colón, 2008; Toms & Stuart, 2014).

When school systems built a school-attending-culture for elementary students, positive gains resulted in high school student attendance because being present at school was engrained in students at a young age (Balfanz & Chang, 2013). Building a common, school-attending-culture helped increase student attendance across all grade levels. Balfanz and Chang (2013) discussed three ways of reaching students in a school system: reach down, reach out, and reach up. Individual schools reached down by observing attendance data from the feeder schools and identifying students at risk. The school administrators reached out to community members and got them involved in the education process. Reaching up took place when school administrators reached up to the

district personnel, and the district personnel helped build a school-attending-culture among all students in the district (Balfanz & Chang, 2013).

Geographic locations of schools impacted students as well. Students who attended rural schools were more likely to dropout, not obtain a high school diploma or General Educational Development certificate, less likely to attend college, and more likely to live in poverty (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014; Provasnik et al., 2007). Rural schools were growing exponentially, and a majority of students attending rural schools were eligible for free or reduced lunch, live in poverty, and/or have gaps in achievement (Johnson et al., 2014). Minority students, who lived in poverty, were more likely to attend a rural school than a city school, and rural schools were spending less money per student than city schools (Provasnik et al., 2007).

Students in poverty were more likely to become truant and eventually dropout of school (Jackson, 2011; Nolan et al., 2012). The attendance of students was impacted negatively by poverty because the students were more likely to move multiple times during the school year, they had less general healthcare, and many times did not have reliable transportation to and from school (Balfanz & Chang, 2013). Poverty impacted high school student attendance more than elementary and middle school students (Silvernail, Sloan, Paul, Johnson, & Stump, 2014).

Student achievement was negatively impacted by poverty, and poverty was found to impact student achievement more than race, community, and home values (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Follman, 2010). Students of poverty had less parental influence, which impacted the student's attendance and achievement (Follman, 2010). Academic achievement for secondary students of poverty was impacted more than the academic

achievement for elementary students of poverty (Silvernail et al., 2014). Teachers could positively impact the achievement of students of poverty by working with them in the classroom, establishing clear rules and routines, and building confidence in their academics (Burney & Beilke, 2008).

The family background of a student (having both a mother and father present in the home, having a change in the family organization, or if they are teenage parents) had a stronger impact on the student's behavior than poverty (Swanson & Schneider, 1999). In school, a majority of the behavioral problems arise from students who did not have both a mother and father at home (Swanson & Schneider, 1999). Students of poverty were more likely to move schools multiple times during their career or even in one year (Engec, 2006). Multiple moves caused students to become more disruptive at school and lead to behavioral issues in the classroom (Engec, 2006). Follman (2010) found that teachers helped decrease the negative behavior and increase the attendance of students of poverty by providing the students with positive reinforcement.

Also, poverty impacted students beyond their primary and secondary school career and did not discriminate based on race or ethnicity. Poverty impacted students for their entire life (Burney & Beilke, 2008). Students of poverty were more likely to drop out of high school and were one-fifth as likely to attend college when compared to students with higher socio-economic statuses (Jackson, 2011; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Jackson (2011) found that low socio-economic high school students who participated in leadership opportunities at school and were taught about the importance of college by their teachers and counselors were more likely to attend college.

Another issue that impacted students was homelessness (National Coalition of the Homeless, 2006). Homelessness was such an issue with students in schools that the Homeless Housing Act was established in the late 1980s to help with homeless students attending school. Students who were homeless were more likely to become truant at school because they did not have a stable home life. In 2000, the Homeless Housing Act was renamed to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which was the current law by which school systems abide (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006). The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act defined a homeless student as “an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, para. 1). The McKinney-Vento Act required school systems to acknowledge homeless students and provide these students with access to and from school (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006).

Student attendance was also impacted by the number of adults in the student’s life (Woessmann, 2015; Ziol-Guest, Duncan, & Kalil, 2015). Single parent homes had become more prevalent over the years, which impacted all races and incomes; however, single parent homes were more common with low income families (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). Children who grew up in single parent homes had to overcome many disadvantages at home, such as psychological issues and lack of healthcare (Woessmann, 2015). Academic achievement of students from single parent homes was negatively impacted due to their home life and these students were less likely to attend college (Woessmann, 2015; Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). Children in single parent homes were impacted more by their home life than the mother’s education level, the age that the mother birthed the child, and number of siblings (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). Being a child

of a single parent home also impacted the child's future through career choice, income level, and marital choices (Woessmann, 2015).

Multi-generational homes have become more prevalent nowadays than 30 years ago. The increase in multi-generational homes was due to an increase in the number of immigrants, people waiting until later in life to marry, a higher number of unemployed adults, and an increase in home foreclosures (Chen, 2010; Taylor et al., 2010). Chen (2010) found some younger adults and children felt they benefitted from having multiple generations living under one roof as it allowed the young adults to experience their culture in more depth and learning from their grandparents.

Programs and interventions had been implemented in different districts around the country to help reduce truancy (Reid, 2012). Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a program implemented in many elementary and middle schools, helped increase positive student behavior, attendance, achievement, and school culture while decreasing truancy and students dropping out of school (Cregor, 2008; Pbis.org, n.d.). When PBIS was implemented with fidelity, researchers found student behavior changed in the school setting and students were more likely to attend school, thus decreasing behavioral referrals and increasing attendance (Guest, 2011; National High School Center, National Center on Response to Intervention, and Center on Instruction, 2010).

Another program implemented in the United States was Check & Connect (Checkandconnect.umn.edu, 2016). Check & Connect was designed as an intervention program for K-12 students who were unengaged in the learning process and at risk for dropping out of school. A trained Check & Connect mentor worked with unengaged students through building relationships with their peers, parents, and teachers for at least

two years. Students who participated in the Check & Connect program were more likely to have an increase in attendance, academic achievement, and graduate on time while decreasing behavioral referrals (Checkandconnect.umn.edu, 2016).

Truancy was an issue that did not discriminate based on ethnicity, home life, or socio-economic level and impacted students all around the world (Balfanz & Chang, 2013; Maynard et al., 2012). Many different programs and interventions were designed to try and reverse the negative effects of truancy for both the student and the community in which the student belonged (Reid, 2012). School-based mentoring programs, where teachers mentor students, had become one of the more popular methods of impacting truancy, student behavior, and academic achievement (Clarke, 2009; Lampley & Johnson, 2010; Toms & Stuart, 2014). Students who participated in school-based mentoring programs were more likely to attend school, which resulted in higher academic achievement, lower behavioral issues, and a higher graduation rate for the school (Clarke, 2009; Gordon et al., 2013; Kilma, Miller, & Nunlist, 2009; Markos, 2011).

#### Statement of the Problem

Researchers have indicated that secondary school students were more likely to be truant than primary school students. When secondary students had an increase in the number of absences, the students were more likely to drop out of school due to a decrease in academic achievement and, as a result, became less productive citizens as adults. Researchers had also shown that participation in school-based mentoring programs could positively influence students by increasing their attendance, academic achievement, and parental relationships, while decreasing the number of behavioral referrals.



Researchers had provided both positive and negative results for student attendance with school-based mentoring programs, as well as other programs, which positively influenced student attendance. This study examined the extent at which a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program impacted attendance data, achievement data, behavioral data, and graduation rate for high school seniors participating in the program in a central west Georgia county by comparing the data to high school seniors who were not participating in the program but lived in the same county. The program that was studied was a multi-year mentoring program that all high school students attended from their freshman to senior year. The students looped with the same teacher and mentoring group every year by keeping the same teacher and cohort of students in the group.

#### Research Questions

Researchers found that mentoring programs had a positive impact on student attendance, achievement, and behavior at school; however, multi-year, looping programs had not been historically studied. Also, researchers found that mentoring programs had a positive impact on the community. The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program had on the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rate of high school seniors at a rural high school in west Georgia. The following research questions were designed to explore the effect of a school-based mentoring program:

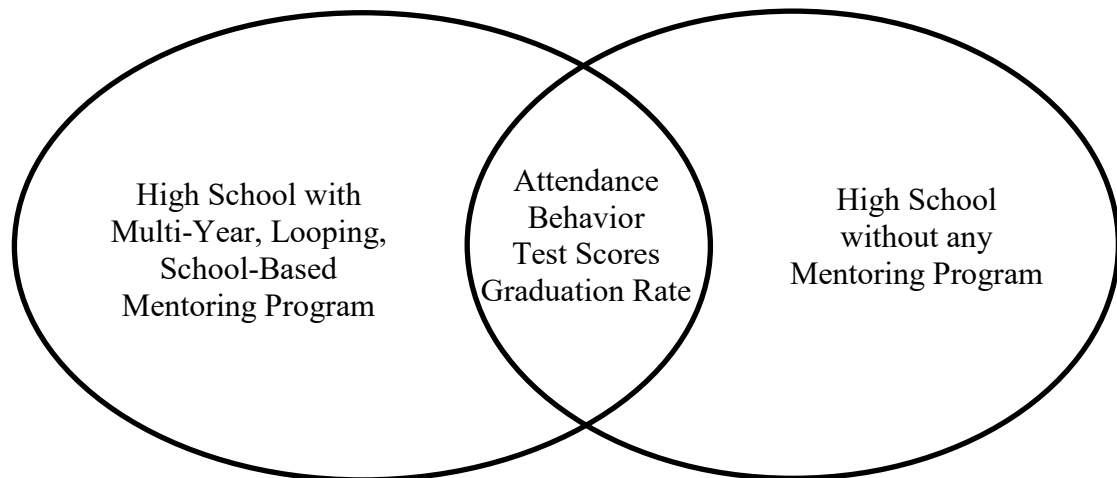
1. To what extent was there a relationship between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

- a. To what extent was there a relationship in attendance between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
  - b. To what extent was there a relationship in behavior referrals between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
  - c. To what extent was there a relationship in Georgia Milestones economics test scores between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
  - d. To what extent was there a relationship in graduation rate between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
2. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the seniors in their mentoring group?
- a. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the attendance of the seniors in their mentoring group?
  - b. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the behavior referrals of the seniors in their mentoring group?
  - c. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the standardized test scores of the seniors in their mentoring group?
  - d. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the graduation rate of the seniors in their mentoring group?

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this study represented the relationship between the high school with the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program, school attendance, behavior, test scores, and graduation rate. Also, the conceptual framework represented the relationship between the high school without mentoring program, school attendance, behavior, test scores, and graduation rate. Finally the relationship between the two schools attendance, behavior, test scores, and graduation rate was analyzed.

Figure 1 proposed the relationship between the high school with the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program, the high school without the mentoring program, and attendance, behavior, test scores, and graduation rate.



*Figure 1.* The relationship between the high school with the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program, the high school without the mentoring program, and attendance, behavior, test scores, and graduation rate.

### Significance of the Study

The results from this study were significant for leadership teams at secondary schools with a high number of students being classified as low socio-economic students. Also, the results from this study provided feedback about implementing a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program for all students.

This study was important for this school district because the schools in the district had a high number of students who were absent, had average graduation rates, and a majority of the population were classified as low socio-economic. Through the results, the district was able to determine if a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program had a positive impact on attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and/or graduation rates. If the school with the mentoring program was found to have a statistically significant increase in attendance, achievement data, and/or graduation rates, or a decrease in behavioral data, the program could have been adopted by the other high schools and possibly middle schools in the district. Implications of this study could positively impact the school and community with increased attendance, decreased behavioral incidents, increased test scores, increased graduation rates, increased parental participation, and/or increased community involvement.

### Procedures

The population for the study included two high schools from the same school district in rural, west Georgia. The two schools were relatively the same in size, racial demographics, and socio-economic status.

In 2015, school A (the school with the mentoring program) had a population of 1,384 students, with a student to teacher ratio of 17.5. The racial breakdown for this

school was 56.5% Caucasian, 34.6% African American, 4.4% two or more races, 3.7% Hispanic, and 0.8% other races. Fifty-eight percent of the student population received free/discounted lunches.

In 2015, school B (the school without the mentoring program) had a population of 1,397 students, with a student to teacher ratio of 17.4. The racial breakdown for this school was 44.7% Caucasian, 43.8% African American, 2.7% two or more races, 5.4% Hispanic, and 3.4% other races. Fifty-five percent of the student population received free/discounted lunches.

Attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rates were obtained from two schools located in the same county in Georgia. The attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rates were collected to determine if the mentoring program established at one school had an impact on its attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and/or graduation rates. The attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rates for the school without the mentoring program were also collected for comparison purposes to the school with the mentoring program.

The attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rate were obtained from school A and school B and analyzed using quantitative methods. Descriptive statistics and *t*-tests was used to determine if there was a statistical significance between the school that participated in the mentoring program and the school that did not participate in the mentoring program.

Individual interviews of six teachers, who each mentored their same group of students from freshman to senior year, were conducted at school A to obtain qualitative

data on the impact of the mentoring program. The individual interviews determined the perceptions that the teachers had on the impact of the mentoring program.

#### Limitations/Delimitations

The limitations of this study were that the implementation dates of the program provided constraints on the available data to study. The demographics, size, and socio-economic statuses of the two schools were relatively the same; however, there were other factors at the school (e.g., school personnel, students, parental involvement, home life, etc.) that impacted student attendance rates, behavioral data, achievement scores, and graduate rate.

The delimitations of this study included only two schools being studied (i.e., one school with the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program implemented and one school without the mentoring program implemented). The two schools were located in the same county in a rural town in west Georgia. The school systems served over 13,000 students from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade during the 2015 school year. The system was divided into three attendance zones, and two of the attendance zones were analyzed for this study. The demographics for the system at the time of the study were 45.4% Caucasian, 42.6% African America, 5.1% Hispanic, 4.3% Multiracial, and 2.6% Asian. Special education students accounted for 9.5% of the population, and gifted student accounted for 11.9% of the population. Free and reduced meals were offered to 66% of the student population.

#### Definition of Terms

*High School Students* – For this study, this term referred to any child who was enrolled in 9th grade through 12th grade.

*High School Teacher* – For this study, this term referred to any teacher who taught students ranging from 9th grade through 12th grade.

*Looping Mentoring Program* – For this study, this term referred to one teacher who mentored the same group of students from their freshman to senior year in high school.

*Mentor* – For this study, this term referred to a high school teacher who worked with a group of students by being a “role model who supported their (the students) educational endeavors and advocated for their (the students) success in the school system” (Kilma et al., 2009, p. 4). Also, the teacher was required to go through training provided by the administration and counselors from School A. Training was provided at the beginning of the school year and periodically throughout the school year.

*Mentoring Program* – For this study, this term referred to a program that was implemented for all students in the school. The students attended a mentoring session every other week with their mentor. The teacher and student discussed grades, attendance, soft skills, and other important information related to school or the life of the student. The students maintained the same mentor throughout their entire high school career (as long as the mentor remained an employee of the school).

*Rural* – “rural schools and districts...are those designated with local codes 41 (rural fringe), 42 (rural distant), or 43 (rural remote)” (Johnson et al., 2014, p. 1).

*School A* – High school with the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

*School B* – High school without the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

*School-based Mentoring Program* – For this study, this term referred to one high school teacher mentoring one group of students from their freshman to senior year in high school.

*Truancy* – Georgia Law defined a truant student as one with "more than five days of unexcused absences" during the school year (Georgia State Board of Education, 2012, p. 1).

### Summary

Mentoring programs had positive effects on student attendance, achievement, and behavior in relationship to low poverty schools, culture/climate of schools, student's home life, and other programs schools use to increase attendance. Data from previous researchers revealed positive correlations between mentoring programs and student attendance, achievement, and behavior; however, none of the studies examined a multi-year mentoring program with the same mentor for students each year. Therefore, the researcher proposed to answer the question: to what extent was there a relationship between high school seniors and high school seniors participating in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

Attendance data, achievement data, behavioral data, and graduation rate were analyzed from two different schools that had comparative student demographics (e.g., race, socio-economic level, number of students in the school, etc.). One school had implemented the multi-year mentoring program, and the other school had no program in place to impact student attendance, behavior data, achievement data, or graduation rate. Also, six teachers from the school with the mentoring program, who each mentored the same group of students from freshman to senior year, were individually interviewed. The



interview data were analyzed to determine the impacts that teachers perceived from the mentoring program.

The results of this study were beneficial for secondary schools that had issues with student attendance, behavior, achievement, and/or graduation rates. Also, the study provided information for secondary schools as a way to increase student-teacher relationships in a school. Finally, the study contributed to the body of literature on school-based mentoring programs.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review will discuss mentoring programs to better understand the effects that those programs had on students in previous research studies. Discussion on poverty, parental support, truancy, and school culture/climate will also be included to obtain a better understanding of what students face while attending high school.

#### Mentoring Programs

##### Teachers as Advisors

Teachers who mentored students from disadvantaged backgrounds helped increase the students' achievement and social skills (Clarke, 2009; Lampley & Johnson, 2010; Markos, 2011; Toms & Stuart, 2014). Students who participated in a mentoring program were found to have an increase in their positive behavior at school, an increase in student-teacher professional relationships, and an increase in academic performance (Clarke, 2009; Gordon et al., 2013; Toms & Stuart, 2014). Sánchez et al. (2008) found that students, who had teachers as mentors, showed a decrease in their tendency for absences and an increase their academic performance.

In a qualitative study completed at the undergraduate level, teacher mentors stated that they had a positive impact on their college-level mentees (Kenricks, Nedunuri, & Arment, 2013). After the first semester, the teacher mentors felt they had a positive relationship with their mentees and that the teacher mentors could answer both academic and social/emotional questions from their mentees. In a survey, the mentees reflected that they had a positive experience with the mentoring program and succeed more

academically due to the mentoring program. The results of this study reinforced “the notion that good mentoring can lead to academic success” (Kendricks et al., 2013, p. 42).

Three attributes, as identified by Ferris, Johnson, Lovitz, Stroud, and Rudisille (2011), of a successful mentoring relationship were honesty, autonomy, and challenge and support. Honesty was identified as a necessary attribute because the student, and teacher must have a trusting relationship where the student can receive honesty feedback during difficult decisions in their lives. The second attribute of a successful mentor-mentee relationship identified by the researchers was autonomy. In this study, autonomy meant that the mentor would listen to the mentee, offer advice, but never make decisions for the mentee. The final attribute was called challenge and support. Mentors challenged their mentees with reflection questions and supported their students by being available at all times (Ferris et al., 2011).

When an adult could mentor a student for at least two years, it was found that this relationship could positively impact the student both on a personal and educational level (Clarke, 2009). Chan et al. (2013) found that when a positive relationship was built between students and teachers, it could influence a positive relationship between the students and their parents. The positive relationship between student and teacher also led to an increase in the student’s self-esteem, which impacted their grades and behavior in school (Chan et al., 2013). According to Lemley, Schumacher, and Vesey (2014), students wanted to know that teachers cared about them. When the students knew that their teachers cared, they were more likely to be engaged in the classroom (Lemley et al., 2014).

When a mentoring program was established for a period of time, a positive and caring relationship was built between students and teachers but boundaries also had to be established (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013). The students understood that boundaries existed in the mentoring relationship and teachers allowed the relationships to grow over time. The boundaries were created to protect both the teacher and student. Clear boundaries had to be developed for interactions at school, in public, and on social media when these close relationships developed. Building a relationship with clearly defined boundaries allowed the teachers to maintain positive relationships with their students because both the teacher and student knew what the clearly defined expectations were ahead of time (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013).

#### Impact on Students

When teachers and students have a close and professional relationship, the impact can be pivotal for the student. Close relationships “can turn a difficult high school experience into a positive and successful one” (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013, p. 72). Mentoring relationships can promote a more positive educational experience for students because they can help the students develop both socially and emotionally. “In particular, positive mentoring relationships are thought to facilitate emotional regulation and to improve youths’ social skills and self-perceptions” (Chan et al., 2013, p. 130). Mentors can help students overcome negative influences and become the positive role model that they need in their life.

Students who participated in school based mentoring programs showed a decrease in their number of unexcused absences as compared to students who did not participate in a mentoring program (Gordon et al., 2013, Kilma et al., 2009). Markos (2011) found that

a freshman high school mentoring program decreased habitually truant students by 11.30%. However, in a research study conducted by Herrick (2010), it was found that a mentoring program did not significantly impact the attendance of students who participated in the program.

Mentoring programs help students feel more confident in forming new, positive relationships with other students and adults (Chan et al., 2013; Markos, 2011). Chan et al. (2013) “found that higher quality mentoring relationships were associated with improvements in students’ relationships with their parents and teachers and that these improvements, in turn, were associated with school-related psychological and behavioral outcomes” (p. 138). Bernstein-Yamashiro and Noam (2013) also discussed how there was a correlation between a student’s positive relationship with adults from school and relationships with adults outside their home.

Mentoring programs have also shown a positive impact on student behavior (Clarke, 2009; Gordon et al., 2013; Markos, 2011). Markos (2011) found that a high school freshman mentoring program significantly decreased student referrals while increasing student achievement. Students who participated in mentoring programs felt that they had more support from their teachers and had a lower number of behavior referrals than students who did not participate in a mentoring program (Clarke, 2009; Gordon et al., 2013).

Positive influences from mentoring programs have also positively impacted the academic achievement of the students participating in the program (Gordon et al., 2013; Kilma et al., 2009; Markos, 2011). In a study conducted by Clarke (2009), students who participated in the mentoring programs demonstrated a positive impact on their grades.

Hickman and Wright (2011) found that high school graduation rates were dependent upon the grade point average of the student and the age of the student when they started the mentoring program.

Another factor that has been found based on participation in a mentoring program was how accepted the student felt by their peers. Participants in the mentoring program displayed an increase in self-confidence, which lead to the students having felt more accepted by their peers. When the students felt more accepted by their peers, they were more likely to attend school (Clarke, 2009; Gordon et al., 2013).

## Poverty

### Rural Schools

Education in the rural setting has continued to grow due to population growth in rural cities (Johnson et al., 2014). Johnson et al. (2014) found the following:

Over 9.7 million students are enrolled in rural school districts, more than 20 percent of all public school students in the United States. More than two in five of those rural students live in poverty, more than one in four is a child of color, and one in eight has changed residence in the previous 12 months. (p. 27)

Rural populations became more diverse over the years which caused larger populations of minority students, larger populations of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, and gaps in student achievement (Johnson et al., 2014). Table 1 displays the information Johnson et al. uncovered during their study of Georgia in 2015.

Historically, expenditures per student were less for high-poverty rural schools versus low-poverty rural schools, while expenditures were greater for high-poverty city schools versus low-poverty city schools (Provasnik et al., 2007). High-poverty rural

schools were identified in remote areas with high populations of minority students, which linked high-poverty rural schools to the disproportionality of minority students. Parents

Table 1

<i>Rural Education Information for Georgia</i>	
<b>State &amp; Priority Rank</b>	<b>Georgia Priority ranking: 8</b>
<b>Narrative</b>	More than 580,000 students attend rural schools in Georgia. Only Texas and North Carolina educate more rural students. Poverty and mobility rates are among the highest in the US with half of rural students living in poverty. Low rates of earned high school diplomas and high rates of unemployment characterize rural adult populations in the state. Only three states have larger rural schools and districts than Georgia, and rural National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) performance is near the bottom nationally (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 51).
<b>Gauge 1: Importance</b>	Gauge rank: 18 Notable/Important/Very Important/Crucial <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Percent rural schools: 37.0% rank 27</li> <li>2. Percent small rural districts: 3.5% rank 40</li> <li>3. Percent rural students: 34.9% rank 14</li> <li>4. Number of rural students: 581,490 rank 3</li> <li>5. Percentage of state education funds to rural districts: 38.5% rank 15</li> </ol> <p>Graph: Number of rural students: 481,490 v. US median 141,632 (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 51)</p>
<b>Gauge 2: Student and Family Diversity</b>	Gauge Rank: 13 Fair/Serious/Critical/Urgent <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Percent rural minority students: 37.8% rank 12</li> <li>2. Percent rural ELL students: 2.9% rank 19</li> <li>3. Percent rural IEP students: 11.0% rank 44</li> <li>4. Number of rural minority students: 220,041 rank 3</li> <li>5. Percent rural mobility: 13.0% rank 14</li> </ol> <p>Graph: Number of rural minority students: 220,041 v. US 23,176 (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 51)</p>
<b>Gauge 3: Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge</b>	Gauge Rank: 11 Notable/Important/Very Important/ Crucial <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma: 81.2% rank 6</li> <li>2. Rural adult unemployment rate: 8.0% rank 12</li> <li>3. Rural median household income: \$50,690 rank 15</li> </ol>

- 
4. Percentage of rural students who are Title I eligible: 22.2% rank 13
  5. Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced lunches: 56.0% rank 9

Graph: Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma: 81.2% v. US 85.4% (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 51).

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**Gauge 4:**

Gauge Rank: 17 Notable/Important/Very Important/ Crucial

**Educational**

**Policy Context**

1. Rural instructional expenditures per pupil: \$5,712 rank 22
2. Ratio of instruction to transportation expenditures: \$15.56 rank 41
3. Median organizational scale (x100): 30,106 rank 4
4. State revenue to schools per local dollar: \$1.04 rank 19
5. Rural salary expenditures per instructional FTE: \$57,596 rank 26

Graph: Median organizational scale (x100): 30,106 v. US Median 3,035 (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 51)

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**Gauge 5:**

Gauge Rank: 13 Fair/Serious/Critical/Urgent

**Educational**

**Outcomes**

1. Rural Grade 4 NAEP performance (math): 239.24 rank 15
2. Rural Grade 4 NAEP performance (reading): 221.62 rank 19
3. Rural Grade 8 NAEP performance (math): 280.2 rank 13
4. Rural Grade 8 NAEP performance (reading): 263.92 rank 17

Graph: Rural Grade 8 NAEP performance (math): 280.20 v. US 286.01 (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 51)

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of students attending school at a rural district were more likely to take their children to sporting events, while parents of students attending school at a city district were more likely to take their children to an education related activity (e.g., visiting a library, museum, or zoo/aquarium). Students who attended rural schools were more likely to dropout, not obtain a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, and live in poverty (Johnson et al., 2014). Finally, students who attended rural school were less likely to attend college (Provasnik et al., 2007).



## Student Attendance

Poverty greatly impacted student attendance because the students moved often or were classified as homeless; they lacked access to general healthcare needs; or they lacked reliable transportation (Balfanz & Chang, 2013). Nolan et al. (2012) found that when comparing students of poverty to students who paid for their lunch:

Students who had a reduced lunch status were 1.55 to 2.30 times as likely to become truant; students who had a free lunch status were 3.11 to 3.82 times as likely to become truant; and homeless students were 4.91 to 9.00 times as likely to become truant. (p. 26)

Students of poverty were more likely to drop out of school, which negatively impacted a school's graduation rate (Jackson, 2011).

High poverty impacted high school student attendance more than elementary and middle school students (Silvernail et al., 2014). High school students who attended a high poverty school were more likely to be absent from school than high school students who attended a low poverty school. School poverty rates did not have a significant impact on student attendance for elementary or middle school (Silvernail et al., 2014).

## Student Achievement

Poverty had a greater impact on student achievement than “race, ethnicity, language, setting, beliefs, and behaviors” (Burney & Beilke, 2008, p. 295). Students from poverty were more likely to have lower academic achievement in core areas (i.e., English, math, science, and social studies) because of a lack of parental influence, attendance issues, lack of childcare, poor nutrition, and viewing violence on television (Follman, 2010; Herrick, 2010). Tine (2014) found that low-socioeconomic students

scored lower on a working memory assessment when compared to high-socioeconomic students.

Poverty negatively impacted student achievement for both low-socioeconomic students and high-socioeconomic students attending high poverty schools (Engec, 2006; Silvernail et al., 2014; Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). When schools of similar poverty levels were compared, primary schools were impacted less by poverty than secondary schools (Silvernail et al., 2014).

Teachers have impacted students of poverty by building their confidence in the classroom and supporting the student as they learned new material (Burney & Beilke, 2008). Follman (2010) found that when teachers had high expectations and cared for their students, students of poverty achieved at higher levels. Academic achievement has been positively impacted by teachers when rules and routines were clearly established and followed. Also, students showed an increase in their academic abilities when instruction was taught through engaging strategies and behavior was dealt with through positive reinforcement (Follman, 2010).

#### Student Behavior

Swanson and Schneider (1999) found a weak association between students of poverty and their behavior in high school. The family background of students identified as behavior problems had a greater impact on student behavior than poverty levels. Students with behavioral issues were more likely to not have both a mother and father present in the home, had a change in their family organization, or were parents themselves (Swanson & Schneider, 1999).

Students of poverty and who moved schools multiple times were more likely to be disruptive at school (Engec, 2006). Positive reinforcement by teachers helped decrease the behavior for students of poverty (Follman, 2010).

### Beyond High School

Burney and Beilke (2008) stated that “poverty is the most important risk factor for all children” (p. 299) and that poverty does not discriminate based on race or ethnicity. Students of poverty were more likely to drop out of high school and not attend college (Jackson, 2011; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). The percentage of low socio-economic students enrolled in a bachelor’s degree program was one-fifth of the percentage of high socio-economic students (12% for low socio-economic students vs. 60% for high socio-economic students). Low socio-economic students not enrolled in a postsecondary institution was four-fifths as much as high socio-economic students (41% for low socio-economic students vs. 8% for high socio-economic students) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).

Jackson (2011) found that 87.9% of the students from a high poverty school attend either a four-year university or a community/technical college. Qualitative analysis from Jackson’s (2011) study revealed that “strong leadership; use of available resources; rigorous academic curriculum; support of teachers; counseling and access to college information; and use of data and accountability standards” were the driving factors for creating a culture of attending college (p. 99).

Students of poverty who received more education were more likely to escape poverty by earning more in their lifetime (Burney & Beilke, 2008). In 2014, students who did not complete high school averaged \$25,000 per year, did complete high school

averaged \$30,000 per year, obtained an associate's degree averaged \$35,000 per year, obtained a bachelor's degree averaged \$49,900 per year, and obtained a master's degree or higher averaged \$59,100 per year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).

### Parental Support

#### Homeless

Homelessness has impacted schools for many years, and it was not until the late 1980s when the Homeless Housing Act was established (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006). In 2000, the Homeless Housing Act received its current name, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006).

The U.S. Department of Education (2009) defined a homeless student as:

- (1) an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;
- (2) an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
- (3) an individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements...;
- (4) an individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;
- (5) an individual or family who—
  - (A) will imminently lose their housing, including housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, and rooms, in hotels or motels not paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations...;
  - (B) has no subsequent residence identified; and
  - (C) lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing; and
- (6) unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defines as homeless under other Federal statutes...(p. 1-2)

The passage of the McKinney-Vento Act has impacted education and provided homeless students with access to school (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006).

### Single Parent Homes

Single parent homes have been multiplying over the years and impact all races; however, single parent homes were more common for low income families (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). Academic achievement of students from single parent homes has been adversely affected and the students were less likely to attend college. Single parent homes impacted students more than the mother's education level, the age that the mother birthed the child and the number of siblings that the child had (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015).

Woessmann (2015) found that children who grew up in single parent homes had many disadvantages to overcome, such as psychological issues and negative impacts on academic achievement. The achievement gap for students of single parent homes compared to standard family homes with two parents was found prevalent among many different countries. Finally, students who grew up in single parent homes were impacted as adults through their career choices, income level, and marital choices. Single parent homes impacted many students negatively; however, some students found a way to overcome all the obstacles (Woessmann, 2015).

### Multi-Generational Homes

Multi-generational homes have become more prevalent today than 30 years ago. The increase in multi-generational homes was due to an increase in the number of immigrants, people waiting until later in life to marry, a higher number of unemployed adults, and an increase home foreclosure (Chen, 2010; Taylor et al., 2010). Chen (2010) found that some younger adults and children felt that they benefitted from having

multiple generations living under one roof by allowing the young adults to experience their culture in more depth.

## Truancy

### Classification

In the United States and many other countries around the world, truancy was found to be a serious problem among students in primary and secondary school (Balfanz & Chang, 2013; Maynard et al., 2012). Truancy had most commonly been defined as an "illegal, unexcused absence from school" (Kearney, 2008, p. 259). A common definition was hard to reach because each state and school district had their own definition; however, most states agreed that a student who was absent from school without an excuse was considered truant (Flaherty et al., 2012; Truancy prevention.org, n.d.). Georgia Law defined a truant student as one with "more than five days of unexcused absences" during the school year (Georgia State Board of Education, 2012, p. 1). Kearney (2008) stated:

Though definitions based only on missed school days or classes are ostensibly clear, they do not represent the full scope of attendance problems displayed by many youths. Many youths with problematic absenteeism are completely absent for limited or extended periods of time, periodically or repeatedly skip classes, are chronically tardy in the morning, demonstrate ongoing morning misbehaviors in an attempt to miss school, and attend school under extreme duress that precipitates continued pleas to parents and school officials for future nonattendance. (p. 265)

Many different factors have caused students to become truant, and the most common of which were developmental, ethnic minority status, lack of family and

parental support, neighborhood and community impact, personal choices, and school experiences (Lampley & Johnson, 2010; Teasley, 2004). Nolan et al. (2012) found that there was a correlation between economic status and age for truancy; the older the student, the more likely they were to be truant.

### Impact on Student

Truancy impacted numerous youth, their future and their community, many negatively because of a low self-esteem (Maynard et al., 2011; Reid, 2012). Flaherty et al. (2012) linked truancy to “an array of negative social consequences, including poor school performance, delinquency, and dropout” (2012, p. 201). Gage et al. (2013) also found a negative association between attendance and grades.

Reid (2012) found that many students who were struggling academically were classified as truants at an early age; when schools tracked and mentored these students, they became successful. However, Hickman and Wright (2011) found that when students were tracked too early, they were less likely to graduate high school. Mentoring at-risk students decreased the likelihood of truancy and created a culture encouraging students to attend college (Gage et al., 2013; Kilma et al., 2009; Maynard et al., 2012; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011).

Chronic absenteeism has been found to impact the atmosphere of the classroom. Teaching became difficult when students were absent because the teacher had to reteach lessons to students who were absent during the original lesson (Balfanz & Chang, 2013).

Truancy had a negative impact on parents as well (Kearney, 2008). Kearney (2008) found that the parents of students who were truant were less likely to be involved in their family, school system, and community. When the students were in elementary

school, they were more likely to face issues academically and socially because of a lack of parental involvement. Also, these students were less likely to participate in extracurricular activities, which lead to some children developing mental illnesses, such as anxiety or depression. These behaviors continued through middle and high school and eventually lead to students dropping out, increased drug use, and/or teen pregnancy (Kearney, 2008). Balfanz and Chang (2013) stated “that chronic absence can be significantly reduced when schools and communities work together to use data to inform action, build a culture of attendance, and help families overcome barriers to getting their children to school” (p. 23).

## School

### Culture/Climate

Balfanz and Chang (2013) found that school systems built culture of attending school starting in elementary school, and this culture helped increase attendance for students in high school. Balfanz and Chang (2013) discussed using “the three Rs: Reach down. Reach out. Reach up” to identify and work with students who are chronically absent (p. 23). School leadership identified the students with chronic absences by reaching down and viewing the attendance of students at their feeder schools. The community around a school was impacted by student attendance and school leadership members have involved members of the community by reaching out. District leadership positively impacted student attendance when the school leadership reaches up to district level leadership, and they made it a priority for all students in the district (Balfanz & Chang, 2013).



### Other Ways to Promote Attendance

Other programs and interventions at the national and local levels have been implemented to help reduce truancy (Reid, 2012). Reid (2012) proposed the implementation of eleven actions to increase student attendance and they are:

1. Ensure that all pupils can enjoy and achieve success...it is essential to enable these pupils to catch up as expeditiously as possible using such interventions as one-to-one strategies involving for example, classroom assistants or learning school mentors...
2. ...each of these “at risk” pupils should be monitored and follow individual support plans as envisaged in the Every Child Matters agenda...
3. ...identify vulnerable pupils and to undertake needs and/or risk assessments, which might for some categories of pupils, involve making home visits at the earliest possible opportunity...
4. More effective work needs to be undertaken to combat bullying in schools, including cyber bullying...
5. There needs to be better analysis of local and national school attendance data to detect trends, patterns and in-school weaknesses...
6. There needs to be a major re-think about the concept of punishing parent(s) or career(s) for their children’s non-attendance...
7. ...implementing more innovative out-of-school programs or better in-school initiatives which broaden pupils’ experiences and provide them with rich experiences they might otherwise never enjoy...
8. ...pupils benefit from reduced timetables which focus on the basics (literacy and numeracy) and, in secondary schools, upon vocational routes...
9. School and staff need much better training in managing school attendance...
10. ...grade schools on their competence of managing school attendance...
11. ...explore pupil’s views about their own attendance and behavior... (p.217-219)

### Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

High schools throughout the United States have implemented Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to increase student behavior, attendance, and achievement, decrease the number of students dropping out, and improve school culture (Cregor, 2008; Pbis.org, n.d.). PBIS had a positive impact on a school when teachers,

staff, and administrators ‘bought into’ the program (Cregor, 2008). When PBIS was implemented with fidelity, through monitoring data to promote decision making, students exhibited proper behavior in their school setting (National High School Center, National Center on Response to Intervention, and Center on Instruction, 2010). The longer PBIS has been implemented in a school, the more positive the teachers felt about the program and the influence the program had on student behavior, attendance, and achievement (Thornton, 2012).

Guest (2011) found that the longer a school participated in PBIS, the attendance rates of the students positively increased. During the first year of PBIS implementation, 0.5% of the students attended school 100% of the days, 65% attended 90-99% of the days, 17% attended 80-89% of the days, 5% attended 70-79% of the days, and 4% attended 69% or fewer days. After PBIS was implemented, student attendance rates had increased; 5% of the students attended school 100% of the days, 69% attended 90-99% of the days, 18% attended 80-89% of the days, 5% attended 70-79% of the days, and 2.5% attended 69% or fewer days (Guest, 2011).

### Check & Connect

Check & Connect was founded as an intervention for students who were unengaged in the learning process (Checkandconnect.umn.edu, 2016). Through Check & Connect, students worked on building relationships (with each other, parents, and mentors) and problem solving skills. “A goal of *Check & Connect* is to foster school completion with academic and social competence” (Checkandconnect.umn.edu, 2016, para. 1). Mentors were trained before they were assigned a group of students to work with throughout the school year. The Check & Connect mentor was required to check on

their assigned students by looking at grades, attendance, and behavior; and connect with their students by partnering with schools, the student's family, and community members. Students who participated in the Check & Connect program were more likely to have an increase in attendance, academic achievement, and graduate on time while they experienced a decrease in behavioral referrals (Checkandconnect.umn.edu, 2016).

## Concept Analysis Chart

TOPIC: Studies Related to School Based Mentoring Programs

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Clarke (2009)	The impact an adult mentoring program had on students over 2 years.	39 ninth-grade students	Quantitative: survey	Decision-making self-efficacy – $\alpha = .81$ Goal-setting self-efficacy – $\alpha = .80$ Perception of teacher support – $\alpha = .62$ Perception of classmates acceptance – $\alpha = .74$ Negative school behavior – $\alpha = .90$
Herrick (2010)	“To determine the effect of a team adviser-advisee academic, behavior, and character mentoring program on the achievement, school engagement, and behavior outcomes of eighth grade student students determined to be above and below eligibility guidelines for free and reduced price lunch participation	36 eighth-grade students	Quantitative: State testing data, district records for academic, attendance, and disciplinary data, and a survey	RQ1: Students who participated in the program improved their scores on national tests RQ2: Students who participated in the mentoring program improved between their pretest and posttest score RQ3: GPA scores in core subject statistically increased for students participating in the mentor program

	during the 2008-2009 school year.”			RQ4: There was not a statistical difference in participation of extra-curricular programs RQ5: There was not a statistical difference for school behavior
Lampley and Johnson (2010)	“This study was designed to determine if partnering the participating at-risk students with caring, supportive adults was associated with the three academic indicators (GPAs, attendance rates, and discipline referrals). This study was limited to a two-year period in one school system.”	54 middle school students	Quantitative: <i>t</i> -tests – comparing pre-intervention scores to post-intervention scores for the three variables	GPA: significantly higher between pre- and post-intervention; 51 out of 54 students improved their grades Discipline: significantly lower between pre- and post-intervention; 51 out of 54 students had fewer referrals Attendance: significantly higher between pre- and post-intervention; 52 out of 54 students improved their attendance

## Summary

Truancy has been an ongoing issue that has not discriminated based on ethnicity, home life, or socio-economic level and impacted students all around the world. Many different programs and interventions have been designed to try and counter act the effects of truancy for both the student and the community that the student belongs. School based

mentoring programs, where teachers mentor students, have become one of the more popular methods of impacting truancy, student behavior, and academic achievement. Students who participated in school based mentoring programs were more likely to attend school, which resulted in higher academic achievement, lower behavioral issues, and a higher graduation rate for the school.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology described the plan to collect data during the research study on a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program. This mentoring program was referred to as multi-year, looping, school-based because the mentors for these students were teachers who taught at the school and the one teacher mentored the same group of students from their freshman to senior year in high school. The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program had on the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rate of high school seniors at a rural high school in west Georgia. Also, this study analyzed the teacher perceptions of the mentoring program.

#### Research Questions and Hypotheses

The researcher chose to use a mixed methods approach (both quantitative and qualitative) to answer the research questions. Quantitative analyses (descriptive statistics and *t*-tests) were used in this study to analyze the relationship between a mentoring program and attendance rates, a mentoring program and behavior, a mentoring program and standardized test scores, and a mentoring program and graduation rates. These analyses were used to address the first research question:

1. To what extent was there a relationship between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
  - a. To what extent was there a relationship in attendance between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping,

school-based mentoring program?

H<sub>0</sub>: There was no statistically significant difference in the attendance of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

H<sub>1</sub>: There was a statistically significant difference in the attendance of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

- b. To what extent was there a relationship in behavior referrals between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

H<sub>0</sub>: There was no statistically significant difference in the number of behavior referrals of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

H<sub>1</sub>: There was a statistically significant difference in the number of behavior referrals of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

- c. To what extent was there a relationship in Georgia Milestones economics test scores between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

H<sub>0</sub>: There was no statistically significant difference in the Georgia Milestones economics test scores of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.



H<sub>1</sub>: There was a statistically significant difference in the Georgia Milestones economics test scores of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

- d. To what extent was there a relationship in graduation rate between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

To answer the second research question, six individual teacher interviews were utilized. Since knowledge concerning the impact of a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program was lacking, qualitative individual interviews were conducted to address this issue. The analyses of the individual interviews were used to answer the second research question:

2. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the seniors in their mentoring group?
  - a. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the attendance of the seniors in their mentoring group?
  - b. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the behavior referrals of the seniors in their mentoring group?
  - c. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the standardized test scores of the seniors in their mentoring group?
  - d. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the graduation rate of the seniors in their mentoring group?

## Research Design

The researcher followed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. The purpose of choosing this design was to use the qualitative results to help explain and support the quantitative results (Creswell, 2013). First, quantitative research and analyses was conducted to address the first research question. Questions posed by the researcher during the quantitative analyses were addressed during the qualitative element. The qualitative research was conducted using individual interviews of six teachers. Analyses of the qualitative data were used to address the second research question.

## Population and Participants

For the quantitative research, the unit of analysis was the total population of seniors from two high schools in the same school district. The seniors from School A have participated in the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program with the same mentor for four years. The seniors met with their mentor teacher at least once a week for 20 minutes during the entire school year. The seniors from School B have not participated in any type of mentoring program. The individual population statistics of the two schools can be found in Table 2. The attendance data, behavioral data, test scores, and graduation rates were obtained for the senior class at each school.

For the qualitative research, the unit of analysis was individual interviews of six teachers. The teachers were identified based on willingness to participate as well as being mentors to students at school A. This teacher population was the best population to answer the research questions because they had all been trained as mentors for the mentoring program and they were volunteers for this study. The teacher mentors from School A received training at the beginning of school year by administrators and school

counselors as well as periodically throughout the school year. Non-volunteers were eliminated from the study due to the lack of willingness to participate.

The quantitative portion of the study consisted of the senior population from school A and the senior population from school B during the 2015-16 school year. The participants for the qualitative study were six teacher volunteers from school A. The teachers were randomly chosen based on their willingness to participate in the research study.

Table 2

*Demographic data for School A and School B*

	School A	School B
Total School Population	1,384	1,397
Total Senior Population	297	285
Student to Teacher Ratio	17.5:1	17.4:1
Caucasian	56.5%	44.7%
African American	34.6%	43.8%
Two or More Races	4.4%	2.7%
Hispanic	3.7%	5.4%
Other Races	0.8%	3.4%
Free/Discounted Lunch	58.3%	55.3%

### Instrumentation

For the quantitative portion, archival attendance, graduation, and behavioral data for seniors were obtained from Infinite Campus. Infinite Campus was the software the school system used to track these data. For test score analysis, the Georgia Milestone Assessment System (GMAS) for the Economics test was used. This test was chosen because all seniors are enrolled in Economics and take the test. Three different

independent-sample *t*-tests were used to determine if there was a statistical significance in attendance, behavior data, and test score data for the two schools in the study.

Graduation data were presented as a percentage.

For the qualitative portion, the researcher created a questionnaire that was designed after the quantitative research questions and administered to participating teachers. The questions were developed based on the research questions in this study.

The following questions were administered on the questionnaire:

1. Your school has a mentoring program that is unlike other mentoring programs talked about in research. How would you describe your schools mentoring program?
2. How does your school focus on student attendance? Describe the impact you feel you have on the attendance of the students in your mentor group.
3. How does your school focus on behavior? Describe the impact you feel you have on the behavior of the students in your mentor group.
4. How does your school focus on getting students to graduate on time? Describe the impact you feel you have on the graduation rate of the students in your mentor group.
5. How does your school focus on academic achievement of all students? Describe the impact you feel you have on the academic achievement of the students in your mentor group.

The questions were administered through individual interviews, which lasted no more than 30 minutes. Before the individual interview started, the research talked the teacher through the informed consent form (Appendix A) and had the teacher sign the

form to obtain informed consent. The interview was recorded, and all participants were assigned alphanumeric identifiers so they could remain anonymous. Only the researcher had access to the recordings of the interviews. After all interviews were conducted, the researcher transcribed the data for analysis.

### Data Collection and Analysis

For research question 1a (To what extent was there a relationship in attendance between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a school-based mentoring program?), attendance data were collected from School A and School B. The attendance data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent-sample *t*-test to determine if there was a statistical difference with  $\alpha = 0.05$  in number of days missed by students between School A and School B. For research question 1b (To what extent was there a relationship in behavior referrals between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a school-based mentoring program?), behavior referral data were collected from School A and School B. The behavior referral data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent-sample *t*-test to determine if there was a statistical difference with  $\alpha = 0.05$  in number of behavioral referrals between School A and School B. For research question 1c (To what extent was there a relationship in Georgia Milestones economics test scores between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a school-based mentoring program?), test score data were collected from School A and School B. The test score data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent-sample *t*-test to determine if there was a statistical difference with  $\alpha = 0.05$  in test scores between School A and School B. For research question 1d (To what extent was there a relationship in graduation rate between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a

school-based mentoring program?), graduation data were collected from School A and School B. The graduation data were then presented in percentage form using descriptive statistics.

For research questions 2 (What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the attendance of the seniors in their mentoring group?), 2a (What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the attendance of the seniors in their mentoring group?), 2b (What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the behavior referrals of the seniors in their mentoring group?), 2c (What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the standardized test scores of the seniors in their mentoring group?), and 2d (What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the graduation rate of the seniors in their mentoring group?), individual interviews of six teachers from School A were conducted to answer five questions. The answers were then transcribed by the researcher, coded by theme, and analyzed qualitatively. The researcher followed an in vivo coding method and conducted the coding by hand.

### Reporting the Data

For the quantitative portion of the research the descriptive statistic data and independent-sample *t*-test data were reported by research question number in chart and narrative form for both School A and School B. The data were then analyzed for statistically significant differences. The researcher chose an independent-sample *t*-test because this statistical test compared the means of two independent groups. School A and School B were two independent groups of high school seniors, and School A had the mentoring treatment while School B had no treatments.

For the qualitative portion of the research, the data were reported by research question and organized by themes. Direct quotes were used as needed to support the findings.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program had on the attendance data, achievement data, behavioral data, and graduation rate of high school seniors at a rural high school in west Georgia. Also, this study analyzed the relationship of attendance, behavior, achievement data, and graduation rate to the mentoring program, as well as, teacher perceptions of the mentoring program. The researcher followed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, which fulfilled the purpose and research questions. The quantitative portion of the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent-sample *t*-test to determine if there was a statistical difference with  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The data were organized by research question in chart and text format. The qualitative portion of the study was conducted using individual interviews of six teachers with a five question questionnaire for the teachers to complete. The data from the questionnaire were then analyzed and coded by theme. Direct quotes were utilized as needed to support and answer the research questions.

## CHAPTER IV

### REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

The report of data and data analysis presented the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted to address the study's research questions. The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program had on the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rates of high school seniors at a rural high school in west Georgia. The study compared data from a high school with a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program to data from a high school without any type of mentoring program.

For the quantitative portion of the research the descriptive statistic data and *t*-test data were reported by research question number in chart and narrative form for both School A and School B. The data were then analyzed for statistically significant differences. For the qualitative portion of the research, the data were reported by research question and organized by themes. Direct quotes were used as needed to support the findings.

#### Research Design

The researcher followed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. The purpose of choosing this design was to use the qualitative results to help explain and support the quantitative results (Creswell, 2013). First, quantitative research and analyses were conducted to address the four parts of the first research question. Questions posed by the researcher during the quantitative analyses were addressed during the qualitative element. The qualitative research was conducted using individual interviews of six



teachers. Analyses of the qualitative data were used to address the four parts of the second research question.

### Participant Descriptions

The participants of the quantitative research consisted of the entire population of high school seniors from two high schools in the same school district; School A with the mentoring program and School B without the mentoring program. The individual population statistics of the two schools can be found in Table 3. The attendance data, behavioral data, Georgia Milestones Economics test scores, and graduation rates were obtained from the senior class at each school.

Table 3

#### *Demographic data for Seniors at School A and School B*

	School A	School B
Total Senior Population	297	285
Caucasian	59.2%	45.2%
African American	32.2%	44.9%
Hispanic	4.1%	5.2%
Other Races	4.5%	4.7%
Free/Discounted Lunch	58.5%	55.1%

The participants of the qualitative study included six teachers from the school with the mentoring program, and they all participated in individual interviews. The teachers were identified based on willingness to participate as well as being mentors to students at school A. This teacher population was the best population to answer the research questions because they had all been trained as mentors for the mentoring program and they were volunteers. Non-volunteers were eliminated from the study due to the lack of willingness to participate.

Email invitations were sent to staff members of the school with the mentoring program, which invited them to participate in the study. When teachers replied with an interest in participating in the study, their names were placed in a pool with the other teachers who expressed interest. Next, six teachers were randomly chosen from the pool, and those teachers participated in individual interviews. Individual interviews were set up with every teacher where they signed an informed consent. After the signed informed consent was received, the researcher progressed with the interview questions. In order to protect the identities of the participants, alphanumeric identifiers were used to distinguish each participant.

### Findings

The researcher chose to use a mixed methods approach (both quantitative and qualitative) to answer the research questions.

#### Research Question 1

Quantitative analyses were used in this study to analyze the relationship between a school with a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program and a high school without any mentoring program by examining attendance rates, behavioral referrals, standardized test scores, and graduation rates. These analyses were used to address the first research question:

1. To what extent was there a relationship between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

### Research Question 1a

To what extent was there a relationship in attendance between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

H<sub>0</sub>: There was no statistically significant difference in the attendance of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

H<sub>1</sub>: There was a statistically significant difference in the attendance of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

The descriptive statistics for the number of absences per high school senior for the seniors at School A (high school with the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program) ( $n = 297$ ) revealed that the mean and standard deviation were  $M = 13.55$  and  $SD = 8.05$  (See Table 4). The descriptive statistics for the number of absences per high school senior for the seniors at School B (high school without any mentoring programs) ( $n = 285$ ) revealed that the mean and standard deviation were  $M = 12.17$  and  $SD = 6.91$  (See Table 4).

An independent-sample  $t$ -test was conducted to compare the number of absences for the seniors at School A and the seniors at School B. The results on the independent  $t$ -test was  $t_{580} = 2.22$ ,  $p = .027$  (two-tailed), evaluated at  $\alpha = .05$ , and equal variance was not assumed. There was a statistically significant difference between the schools in favor of School B; H<sub>0</sub> was rejected.

Table 4

*Measures of Dispersion of the Number of Absences for High School Seniors*

School	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
A – Mentoring Program	297	13.55	8.05
B – No Mentoring Program	285	12.17	6.91

#### Research Question 1b

To what extent was there a relationship in behavior referrals between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

H<sub>0</sub>: There was no statistically significant difference in the number of behavior referrals of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

H<sub>1</sub>: There was a statistically significant difference in the number of behavior referrals of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

The descriptive statistics for the number of behavior referrals per high school senior for the seniors at School A (high school with the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program) ( $n = 297$ ) revealed that the mean and standard deviation were  $M = 0.581$  and  $SD = 10.09$  (See Table 5). The descriptive statistics for the number of behavior referrals per high school senior for the seniors at School B (high school without any mentoring programs) ( $n = 285$ ) revealed that the mean and standard deviation were  $M = 0.613$  and  $SD = 10.42$  (See Table 5).

An independent-sample *t*-test was conducted to compare the number of behavioral referrals for the seniors at School A and School B. The results on the independent *t*-test was  $t_{580} = -.195$ ,  $p = .845$  (two-tailed), evaluated at  $\alpha = .05$ , and equal variance was

assumed. There was no statistically significant difference between School A and School B;  $H_0$  was failed to be rejected.

Table 5

*Measures of Dispersion of the Number of Behavior Referrals for High School Seniors*

School	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
A – Mentoring Program	297	0.581	10.09
B – No Mentoring Program	285	0.613	10.42

#### Research Question 1c

To what extent was there a relationship in Georgia Milestones economics test scores between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

$H_0$ : There was no statistically significant difference in the Georgia Milestones economics test scores of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

$H_1$ : There was a statistically significant difference in the Georgia Milestones economics test scores of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program.

The descriptive statistics for the Georgia Milestones economics test score for the seniors at School A (high school with the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program) ( $n = 297$ ) revealed that the mean and standard deviation were  $M = 78.64$  and  $SD = 12.62$  (See Table 6). The descriptive statistics for the Georgia Milestones economics test score for the seniors at School B (high school without any mentoring programs) ( $n = 285$ ) revealed that the mean and standard deviation were  $M = 77.82$  and  $SD = 12.18$  (See Table 6).

Table 6

*Measures of Dispersion of the Georgia Milestones Economics Test for High School Seniors*

School	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
A – Mentoring Program	297	78.64	12.62
B – No Mentoring Program	285	77.82	12.18

An independent-sample *t*-test was conducted to compare the number of absences for the seniors at School A and School B. The results on the independent *t*-test was  $t_{580} = .859, p = .391$  (two-tailed), evaluated at  $\alpha = .05$ , and equal variances was assumed. There was no statistically significant difference between School A and School B;  $H_0$  was failed to be rejected.

Research Question 1d

To what extent was there a relationship in graduation rate between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

School A (high school with the mentoring program) graduated 80.90% of their high school seniors on time, while School B (high school without the mentoring program) graduated 74.7% of their high school seniors on time, a difference of 6.2% (See Table 7).

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics of Graduation Rates for High School Seniors*

School	Percent Graduated
A - Mentoring Program	80.90%
School B - No Mentoring Program	74.70%

Research Question 2

To answer the second research question, six individual teacher interviews were utilized. Because knowledge concerning the impact of a multi-year, looping, school-

based, high school mentoring program was lacking, qualitative individual interviews were conducted to address this issue. The analyses of the individual interviews were used to answer the second research question:

2. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the seniors in their mentoring group?

#### Research Question 2a

What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the attendance of the seniors in their mentoring group?

The main purpose of this question was to gain insight on the quantitative analysis of research question 1a. The themes that were prevalent were student contact, parent contact, and student accountability. Overall, the teachers perceived that they had a positive impact on attendance; however, they also felt that they might not be preparing the students for their future because of the constant monitoring by an adult (the mentor).

All of the interview participants agreed that student contact was the most important part of informing students of the attendance. The interview participants stated that they were required to make contact with the students about their attendance on a regular basis if it was an issue. One interview member, I1, stated that they had, “mixed feelings (about the number of contacts) because a college or job is not going to beg you to come to class or work”. A different interview member, I3, stated that, “I would encourage the students to be mindful of their attendance and its importance in their academic success.” Another interview member, I6, stated, “my students know attendance is vital and they also know they can count on me to help them keep track of their attendance.”

The second reoccurring theme was parent contact among all the interviewees. The mentor teachers were required to maintain an open line of communication between the student's parent/guardian and school. Interviewer I6 stated, "parent contact is made at least twice a month...I have built great relationships with my students and their parents." Interviewer I1 stated, "I called one parent on a bi-weekly basis about her son making up lost class time...so he could graduate on time."

The final emergent theme was student accountability. Interviewer I4 stated, "we are strict about attendance and we hold them accountable for their absences, but we also give them the opportunity to make things right if they are out too much." Interviewer I2 stated that, "students are given the opportunity to make up excess absences on select days after school and some Saturdays." The mentor teacher followed up with the student and their parent to ensure that all the criteria were met for the student to make up missed time.

#### Research Question 2b

What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the behavior referrals of the seniors in their mentoring group?

The main purpose of this question was to gain insight on the quantitative analysis of research question 1b. The themes that were prevalent in the qualitative analysis were parent contact, student contact, and student accountability. Overall, the teachers perceived that they had a positive impact on the number of behavioral referrals for the students in their mentoring group.

The teacher mentors agreed that parent contact was the most important theme with behavior. Interviewee I6 stated, "parent contact is very important in this process (decreasing behavior incidents) and is often times made by the classroom teacher as well



as the mentor teacher”. Another interview member, I4, stated, “As a teacher, if I have an issue with the students I will contact their mentor teacher as well as the parents.” A different interview member, I1, stated, “...notifying the parents is necessary. When a parent knows about a low level behavior issue, it can be handled at home because low level incidents are not logged into the referral system.”

The second most common occurring theme was student contact. Interviewer I6 stated, “my mentor students expect me to approach them and redirect any necessary behaviors that may distract them from their ultimate goal, graduation.” Another interview member, I2, stated, “having discussions with the students about their behavior is absolutely necessary as a mentor teacher because the mentors have built trusting, respectful relationships with those students.”

The final theme that was prevalent was student accountability. Interviewee I5 stated, “students are held accountable for their behavior by their classroom teacher and mentor; however, the students also need to hold themselves accountable.” A different interviewee, I3, stated, “I feel that I did have an impact on the students in my mentor group and they wanted to please their classmates and me by doing well in all their classes because we all hold each other accountable.”

#### Research Question 2c

What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the standardized test scores of the seniors in their mentoring group?

The main purpose of this question was to gain insight on the quantitative analysis of research question 1c. The themes that were prevalent in the qualitative analysis were student contact, parent contact, and earning credits. The teachers had mixed perceptions

on their impact for student achievement. Some teachers perceived that they had a positive impact on student achievement for all students while others perceived that they (teachers and students) were only focused on the students earning credits and not increasing their achievement.

Student contact was the most reoccurring theme for the impact teachers perceived they had on the standardized test scores of the seniors in their mentoring group.

Interviewee I1 stated, "I was in constant contact with my mentor students about their grades and I was able to encourage my students to communicate with their teachers and ask for the extra help when needed." Another interviewee, I2, stated, "I encourage high performance levels in all my mentor students and consistent improvement on their academics." Interviewee I3 stated, "There are several programs at our school that support high academic achievement. For my mentor group, I focused on what they were doing well in academics as well as in their life."

The second prevalent theme was parent contact; mentors were in constant contact with parents about grades (both positive and negative). Interviewee I4 stated, "I would contact parents when I felt their student's grades could be better. Not just failing or borderline students." Another interviewee, I2, explained, "I maintained consistent contact with my students' parents/guardians and encouraged them to encourage their students to consistently improve their academic performance."

The final theme that was prevalent was earning credits. Interviewee I1 stated, "teachers work hard to make sure that the students in their classes are given the opportunity to learn about the subject matter being taught so they can be successful and earn a credit for the class." Another interviewee, I2, stated, "unfortunately we have

focused as a school on students earning credits and graduating versus increasing student achievement.” Overall, the teachers felt that they provided a positive influence on student achievement; however, the focus of the school was on earning credits and graduating on time.

#### Research Question 2d

What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the graduation rate of the seniors in their mentoring group?

The main purpose of this question was to gain insight on the quantitative analysis of research question 1d. The themes that were prevalent in the qualitative analysis were student contact, parent contact, and credit recovery. The teachers had mixed perceptions on their impact for graduation rates. Some teachers perceived that they had a positive impact on the graduation rate for all students while other teachers perceived that the students were only focused on earning credits to graduate on time.

Student contact was the most reoccurring theme for the impact teachers perceived they had on the graduation rate of the seniors in their mentoring group. Interviewee I2 stated, “I monitor grades for my mentor students on a weekly basis, talk to the students, and distribute their progress reports. Through this constant monitoring, I know when a student falls off track for graduation.” Another interviewee, I3, stated, “I would communicate with my mentor students weekly and help them understand the importance of doing well in school and graduating on time. I also encouraged them to ask for tutoring.” Interviewee I4 stated, “we as teachers do everything we can to make sure the students are successful, sometimes I would contact my mentees teachers to see if there was anything that could be done to increase the student’s grade in the class.”

The second prevalent theme for graduation rate was parent contact. Interviewee I1 stated, "I did have one student that fell behind on his course work and I spoke with him and his mom on a weekly basis; having us push him is probably what helped him graduate on time." Interviewee I3 stated, "I communicated with the parents of my mentees on a monthly basis to discuss grades and credits earned toward graduation."

The final theme prevalent for graduation rate was credit recovery. Interviewee I3 stated, "our school has several programs to help students graduate on time – tutoring (through athletics, clubs, computer sessions, and individually), credit recovery (before, during, and after the school day and Saturday sessions), and recovery of missing work during the actual course." Interviewee I6 stated, "credit recovery opportunities are provided to all students to maintain on track to graduation." Overall, the teachers felt that the school had a positive influence on the students for graduating on time.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program had on the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rate of high school seniors at a rural high school in west Georgia. First, quantitative analyses were conducted to address the first research question. Next, qualitative analyses were conducted to address the second research question.

For the quantitative portion of the study, the results on the independent-sample *t*-test for research question 1a (attendance) was  $t_{580} = 2.22$ ,  $p = .027$  (two-tailed), evaluated at  $\alpha = .05$ , and equal variance was not assumed. There was a statistical difference between the schools in favor of School B (the school without the mentoring program);  $H_0$ .

was rejected. The results on the independent-sample  $t$ -test for question 1b (behavior) was  $t_{580} = -.195, p = .845$  (two-tailed), evaluated at  $\alpha = .05$ , and equal variance was assumed. There was no statistical difference between School A and School B;  $H_0$  was failed to be rejected. The results on the independent-sample  $t$ -test for question 1c (achievement data) was  $t_{580} = .859, p = .391$  (two-tailed), evaluated at  $\alpha = .05$ , and equal variance was assumed. There was no statistical difference between School A and School B;  $H_0$  was failed to be rejected. For question 1d (graduation percentage), 80.90% of the high school seniors at the high school with the mentoring program graduated on time while 74.7% of the high school seniors at the high school without the mentoring program graduated on time, a difference of 6.2%.

For the qualitative portion of the study, teacher overall felt that they had a positive impact on students. For research question 2a (teacher impact on student attendance), the teachers perceived that they had a positive impact on attendance; however, they also felt that they might not be preparing the students for their future because of the constant monitoring by an adult (the mentor). For research question 2b (teacher impact on student behavior), the teachers perceived that they had a positive impact on the number of behavioral referrals for each student in their mentor group. For research question 2c (teacher impact on students achievement), some teachers perceived that they had a positive impact on student achievement for all students while others perceived that they (teachers and students) were only focused on the students earning credits and not increasing their achievement. For research question 2d (teacher impact on graduation rate), some teachers perceived that they had a positive impact on the graduation rate for

all students while other teachers perceived that the students were only focused on earning credits to graduate on time.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The summary, conclusions, and recommendations analyzed and discussed the findings of Chapter V. The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program had on the attendance data, achievement data, behavioral data, and graduation rate of high school seniors at a rural high school in west Georgia. The study analyzed a high school with a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program and compared the data to a high school without any type of mentoring program.

#### Summary

In the United States, truancy was an issue that impacted many school systems. Truancy has been found to impact students both in school and later in their lives. The lasting impact that truancy had on a student produced the necessity to examine the impact that a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program had on the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rate of high school seniors at a rural high school in west Georgia.

Many research studies focused on the impact a single year mentoring program had on select students; no studies focused on the impact a looping, four-year mentoring program had on the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, or graduation rate for high school seniors. The researcher utilized this study to help fill the gap in the research.

This study analyzed data from high school seniors after they successfully completed a four-year mentoring program at a high school. The mentoring program was

looping, meaning that the students retained the same mentors throughout their high school careers, and school-based, meaning that the meetings took place during the school day. The researcher collected the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rate from the school with the mentoring program and from a neighboring school, with like demographics, without any type of mentoring program.

Previous research found that students who participated in a mentoring program had an increase in their positive behavior at school, an increase in student-teacher professional relationships, and an increase in academic performance (Clarke, 2009; Gordon et al., 2013; Toms & Stuart, 2014). Based on previous research, the researcher posed the following research questions for this study:

1. To what extent was there a relationship between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
  - a. To what extent was there a relationship in attendance between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
  - b. To what extent was there a relationship in behavior referrals between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
  - c. To what extent was there a relationship in Georgia Milestones economics test scores between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?



- d. To what extent was there a relationship in graduation rate between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
2. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the seniors in their mentoring group?
    - a. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the attendance of the seniors in their mentoring group?
    - b. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the behavior referrals of the seniors in their mentoring group?
    - c. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the standardized test scores of the seniors in their mentoring group?
    - d. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the graduation rate of the seniors in their mentoring group?

The researcher conducted a mixed methods study to determine the impact a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program had on high school students. Research question 1 (the impact that the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program had on the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rate) was analyzed quantitatively and research question 2 (the perceptions of the impact that the teachers had on the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rate of the high school seniors) was analyzed qualitatively.

#### Analysis of Research Findings

For research question 1a, the researcher discovered that there was a statistical difference between School A and School B in regards to the number of days a senior was

absent during their senior year; however, it was not in the direction that the researcher anticipated. The researcher rejected  $H_0$  because the independent-sample  $t$ -test was in favor of School B. For research question 1b, the researcher discovered that there was no statistical difference between School A and School B in regard to the number of behavioral referrals per senior; the researcher failed to reject the  $H_0$ . For research question 1c, the researcher discovered that there was no statistical difference between School A and School B in regard to student achievement on the Georgia Milestones economics test; the researcher failed to reject the  $H_0$ . For research question 1d, the researcher discovered that School A had 6.2% more of their seniors graduate on time.

For research question 2a, the researcher found that the teachers perceived they had a positive impact on attendance; however, they also felt that they might not be preparing the students for their future because of the constant monitoring by an adult (the mentor). For research question 2b, the researcher found that the teachers perceived they had a positive impact on the number of behavioral referrals. For research question 2c, the researcher found that some teachers perceived they had a positive impact on student achievement for all students while others perceived that they (teachers and students) were only focused on the students earning credits and not increasing the students overall achievement. For research question 2d, the researcher found that some teachers perceived that they had a positive impact on the graduation rate for all students while other teachers perceived that the students were only focused on earning credits to graduate on time.

### Discussion of Research Findings

1. To what extent was there a relationship between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
  - a. To what extent was there a relationship in attendance between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

In previously conducted research studies, students who were mentored by teachers had a decrease in their number of absences (Lampley & Johnson, 2010; Sánchez et al., 2008). Lampley and Johnson (2010) found that 52 of the 54 students mentored in their study had a decrease in the number of days absent at the completion of the mentoring program. Sánchez et al. (2008) found that students who were mentored had a sense of belonging at school that increased the number of days that the students were present at school.

After analyzing the results on the independent-sample *t*-test for research question 1a, the researcher discovered that there was a statistical difference between School A and School B in regards to the number of days seniors were absent during their senior year; however, it was not in the direction that the researcher anticipated. The researcher rejected  $H_0$  because the *t*-test was in favor of School B. The school without the mentoring program had fewer days absent per student than the school with the mentoring program. This result could be due to the time frame of the data that were analyzed in the study. Different results may have occurred if subgroups were analyzed independently or if different implementation years were tested.

1. To what extent was there a relationship between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
  - b. To what extent was there a relationship in behavior referrals between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

In previously conducted research studies, students who were mentored by teachers had a decrease in their numbers of behavioral referrals (Chan et al., 2013; Clarke, 2009; Gordon et al., 2013; Lampley & Johnson, 2010; Markos, 2011). Clarke (2009) found a statistical difference, in favor of students who were mentored, in behavior referrals for students in a mentoring program when compared to students who were not mentored. Lampley and Johnson (2010) compared discipline data pre- and post-mentoring intervention and found that 51 of the 54 students who were mentored had a decrease in behavioral incidents after they were mentored. However, in a study conducted by Herrick (2010) there was no statistical difference found between eighth-grade students participating in a mentoring program and eighth-grade students not participating in a mentoring program

After analyzing the results on the independent-sample t-test for research question 1b, the researcher discovered that there was no statistical difference between School A and School B regarding to the number of behavior referrals for the senior class. The researcher failed to reject the  $H_0$ , which states that there was no statistically significant difference in the number of behavior referrals of high school seniors and high school seniors participating in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program. School

A did have a lower number of behavior referrals; however, the difference was not significant. This result could be due to the time frame of the data that were analyzed in the study. Different results may have occurred if subgroups were analyzed independently or if different implementation years were tested.

1. To what extent was there a relationship between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
  - c. To what extent was there a relationship in Georgia Milestones economics test scores between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

In previously conducted research studies, students who were mentored by teachers had an increase in their test scores on national tests, overall classroom grades, and GPA (Herrick, 2010; Lampley & Johnson, 2010). Herrick (2010) compared low income verses non-low income pre- and post-test student scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for reading, math, and science and found that the students scored slightly better than the national average. Also, Herrick (2010) compared the GPA for the students and found that the students GPA did increase but the increase was not statistically significant. Lampley and Johnson (2010) compared end-of-year GPAs for pre- and post-mentoring intervention and found 51 of 54 students who were mentored had statistically significant higher GPAs after they were mentored.

After analyzing the results on the independent-sample t-test for research question 1c, the researcher discovered that there was no statistical difference between School A and School B in the Georgia Milestones economics test scores for the senior class. The

researcher failed to reject the  $H_0$  that states there was no statistically significant difference in the Georgia Milestones economics test scores of high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program. This result could be due to the time frame of the data that were analyzed in the study. Different results may have occurred if subgroups were analyzed independently or if different implementation years were tested.

1. To what extent was there a relationship between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?
  - d. To what extent was there a relationship in graduation rate between high school seniors and high school seniors who participated in a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program?

Previously conducted research for the impact of a mentoring program on high school graduation rates was not found. For question 1d, 80.90% of the high school seniors at School A graduated on time while 74.7% of the School B graduated on time, a difference of 6.2%. This difference could be due to the impact that the teacher mentors had on the students at School A.

2. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the seniors in their mentoring group?
  - a. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the attendance of the seniors in their mentoring group?

Previously conducted qualitative research, for teacher perceptions, on the impact a mentor had on student attendance of a student participating in a mentoring program was

not found. In this study, the researcher found that the teachers perceived they had a positive impact on attendance; however, they also perceived that they might not be preparing the students for their future because of the constant monitoring by an adult (the mentor). This perception could be due to the amount of time, effort, and sometimes money that the mentor teachers invested in their mentor group. The teachers were required to make a certain number of parent contacts each month for both positive and negative issues. Based on the number of contacts and the development of relationships, the mentors may have perceived a greater influence in the students' attendance.

2. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the seniors in their mentoring group?
  - b. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the behavior referrals of the seniors in their mentoring group?

Previously conducted qualitative research, for teacher perceptions, on the impact a mentor had on behavior referrals of a student participating in a mentoring program was not found. In this study, the researcher found that the teachers perceived they had a positive impact on the number of behavioral referrals. This perception could be due to the amount of time the mentor spent with the students and the number of parent contacts that the mentor teachers had to make each week. When a student from the teacher's mentor group was in trouble, the mentor teacher was notified so they were a part of the conversation between the student, parent, and school.

2. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the seniors in their mentoring group?

- c. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the standardized test scores of the seniors in their mentoring group?

Previously conducted qualitative research, for teacher perceptions, on the impact a mentor had on standardized test scores of a student participating in a mentoring program was not found. In this study, the researcher found that some teachers perceived they had a positive impact on student achievement for all students while others perceived that they (teachers and students) were only focused on the students earning credits and not increasing the students' overall achievement. Again, the mentor teachers spent a lot of time contacting students and parents in their mentor group about the students' grades and attendance. Based on the number of student and parent contacts, the mentor teacher may have perceived that they helped influence the students' achievement in school.

2. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the seniors in their mentoring group?

- d. What impact did the high school teachers perceive they had on the graduation rate of the seniors in their mentoring group?

Previously conducted qualitative research, for teacher perceptions, on the impact a mentor had on the graduation rate of a student participating in a mentoring program was not found. In this study, the researcher found that some teachers perceived that they had a positive impact on the graduation rate for all students while other teachers perceived that the students were only focused on earning credits to graduate on time. The teachers perceived that some students were only focused on earning credits and graduating on time because of the number of interventions that the school put in place. This perception could be due to the number of contacts that the mentor teacher made with the seniors in



their group. The mentor teachers could have perceived that they had a significant impact on graduation rates because of the relationships they built with the students in their mentor group.

### Limitations

Despite the mentoring program being a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program, the mentoring program had only been implemented for 4 years at the time of collection of the quantitative data, and the school without the mentoring program had not implemented any type of mentoring for their students. Thus, the implementation dates provided constraints on the available data to study. Another limitation that impacted the quantitative research was the demographics, size, and socio-economic statuses of the two schools. The schools were relatively the same in all areas previously stated; however, there were other factors at the school (e.g., school personnel, students, parental involvement, home life, etc.) that could have impacted student attendance rates, behavioral data, achievement scores, and graduate rate.

### Implications for Practice

The implications of this study for the field of education research show that multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program is a complicated program that impacted students and teachers in many different ways. While the researcher did see a positive decrease in behavior referrals, an increase in achievement, and an increase in graduation rates, no data were statistically significant to back up the claims. The data presented a positive statistically significant correlation between School B and the attendance of the senior class. The researcher does caution readers not to assume that the mentoring

program caused a negative impact on the attendance data for the school with the mentoring program.

Another implication from this study was the support that the teachers at School A perceived they provided to students in the mentoring program. The roles that the teachers played as mentors definitely impacted the teachers. The teachers perceived that they had a positive impact on the students in their mentoring groups, and many went above and beyond to maintain positive lines of communication between the students, parents, and school. The teachers worked hard to develop trusting relationships with the students in their mentoring groups and the parents of the students because they worked with the same groups for 4 years.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Valuable information was gained about a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program through this research; however, the researcher has a few suggestions for future research.

1. To gain a student perspective on the impact of the mentoring program, the researcher suggested interviewing seniors who participated in all four years of the program.
2. To gain a perspective on the impact the mentoring program had on specific subgroups, the research suggested analyzing the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rates by subgroups between the two schools.
3. To compare historical data for one senior class, the researcher suggested analyzing data from the studied seniors in their freshman, sophomore, junior, and

senior year to determine the impact the mentoring program had over multiple years on the same class of students.

4. To compare data from one class of students versus two different schools, the researcher suggested comparing middle school data (no mentoring) to high school data (mentoring for all 4 years) for the same students.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent a multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program had on the attendance data, behavioral data, achievement data, and graduation rate of high school seniors at a rural high school in west Georgia. The researcher conducted a mixed methods study to determine the impact of the multi-year, looping, school-based mentoring program. The quantitative portion of the study statistically analyzed the attendance data, behavior data, achievement data, and graduation rate of the senior class at a school with the mentoring program (School A) and compared the data to a school without a mentoring program (School B). The qualitative portion of the study consisted of six individual teacher interviews who were mentors at School A. The interview data were analyzed to determine the impact the teachers perceived they had on the students in their mentoring groups.

The statistical findings indicated that School B did have a lesser number of days absent per senior than School A. School A had lower behavior referrals and higher student achievement; however, the statistical findings were not significant. For graduation rates, School A had a higher percentage of students graduate on time. The qualitative findings indicated that the teachers perceived they had a positive impact on student attendance, behavior, achievement, and graduation rate. The teachers who were

interviewed perceived that their school established many different programs and opportunities for their students to ensure that they stayed on track during their high school career. These programs and opportunities were designed to increase student attendance, decrease behavior referrals, increase student achievement, and encourage the students to graduate on time.

### Concluding Thoughts

During the quantitative data analysis phase of this research, I was quite surprised with the findings. I really thought that I was going to see a positive statistically significant impact from the mentoring program, especially after all of my previous research resulted in positive impacts. During the qualitative part of my study, I was not surprised at my findings. These teachers put their hearts and souls into the mentoring program and the students that are in their groups. I really understood the connection that they had with the students in the mentoring groups and even the parents of the students during the interviews. I am eager to continue this research over multiple years with the same groups of students. I would like to observe the impact of the program with one group of students over multiple years to see if that produced statistically significant results.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A



**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**  
**Informed Consent Form**

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Devon Lassetter, a student in the Curriculum and Leadership Department at Columbus State University. Dr. Michael Richardson is the faculty member supervising this study.

**I. Purpose:**

The purpose of this project is to determine to what extent a looping, teacher-based, high school mentoring program have on the attendance data, achievement data, behavioral data, and graduation rate of high school seniors at a rural high school in west Georgia.

**II. Procedures:**

Devon Lassetter will conduct individual teacher interviews to obtain qualitative data on the school mentoring program. The individual teacher interviews will last approximately 30 minutes and be recorded using the "Just Press Record" app on an iPhone or iPad. The information received in the interview will be reported anonymously. At the completion of the study, all of the recordings and interview transcriptions will be destroyed. The data will not be used in any other future research studies.

**III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:**

There are minimal psychological risks involved in this study. If there are any discomforts after a teacher has been randomly selected, that teacher may be excused from the research process and another teacher will be selected.

**IV. Potential Benefits:**

The results of this study may be significant for the leadership teams at secondary schools with a high number of students being classified as low socio-economic students. The results of this study may provide feedback about the necessity to implement a school-based mentoring program for students.

**V. Costs and Compensation:**

There are no costs or compensation for volunteering to participate in the study.

**VI. Confidentiality:**

Teacher data from the qualitative portion will be identified by random numbers; teacher names or any other identifiable data will not be recorded. All of the data from the interviews will be stored in password protected files which will be deleted after the successful completion of the study.

**VII. Withdrawal:**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and your withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Devon Lassetter at \_\_\_\_\_ or [lassetter\\_devon@columbusstate.edu](mailto:lassetter_devon@columbusstate.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at [irb@columbusstate.edu](mailto:irb@columbusstate.edu).

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project.

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Signature of Participant

---

Date

## APPENDIX B

## Devon Lassetter – Interview Protocol Form

Institution: Columbus State University

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: Devon Lassetter

#### Introductory Protocol

*To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. For your information, only I will have access to the tapes which will be destroyed after they are transcribed. Please sign this form devised to meet my human subject requirement. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.*

*I have planned this interview to last no longer than thirty minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.*

#### Introduction

*You have been randomly selected to speak with me today because you volunteered and your name was randomly selected from the list of volunteers. My research project as a whole focuses on the impact of the mentoring program at your high school over a four year implementation period. My study will not evaluate you as a mentor but rather the impact you feel the mentoring program has on students during their four years of high school. Do you have any questions before we get started?*

*We will now get started with the interview.*

#### Research Questions

1. Your school has a mentoring program that is unlike other mentoring programs talked about in research. How would you describe your schools mentoring program?
2. How does your school focus on student attendance? Describe the impact you feel you have on the attendance of the students in your mentor group.
3. How does your school focus on behavior? Describe the impact you feel you have on the behavior of the students in your mentor group.
4. How does your school focus on getting students to graduate on time? Describe the impact you feel you have on the graduation rate of the students in your mentor group.
5. How does your school focus on academic achievement of all students? Describe the impact you feel you have on the academic achievement of the students in your mentor group.