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The perceptions of effects of a study skills course, "Dynamics of Effective Study," on the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school

Josephine Ann Allen

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, jaoubre@aol.com

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THE PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTS OF A STUDY SKILLS COURSE, “DYNAMICS OF EFFECTIVE STUDY,” ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS AT A DEDICATED ACADEMIC MAGNET HIGH SCHOOL

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Counseling

by
Josephine Ann Allen
B.S., Nicholls State University, 1976
M.A., Southern University, 1988
M.A., Southern University, 1990
December, 2003
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ who has given me this wonderful gift and to my loving mother, Mrs. Daisy Celestin Allen, who has always believed in education and has supported me throughout my academic endeavors.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most appreciative to my former principal, Mr. James B. Williams, Jr., who encouraged me to complete this study and East Baton Rouge Parish for allowing me to conduct this research. I am also thankful to the participants in the study - teachers, students, parents, and administrators of Baton Rouge Magnet High School - for allowing me to conduct this research.

I want to acknowledge a former student of mine, Harley Becnel, for reminding me of why I started this educational journey and why I persisted to complete the process. All children deserve to be properly educated. With love for and support of each other, teachers and students can endure challenges and the outcomes of those challenges.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators on the effectiveness of a study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school.

Qualitative research methods were utilized in this study. Fifteen African American students who completed the study skills course, fifteen African American students who did not take or complete the study skills course, five former study skills teachers, and three administrators from the dedicated academic magnet school volunteered to participate in the study. Open-ended interviews were conducted with the students, teachers, and administrators. The students were matched by gender, class, entrance GPAs and entrance reading stanine scores from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

Data were collected from written documents, transcripts, fieldnotes, and interviews from the volunteers from the dedicated academic magnet high school and three other high schools in the school district in southeast Louisiana. Data were also collected from written documents from the school systems.

Perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators of the effectiveness of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on the academic achievement of African American students were varied. All student participants in the study skills course, eight out of fifteen student non-participants in the study skills course, and three out of five former study skills teachers indicated that they perceived the study skills course to be effective for African American students. All three administrators indicated that they
perceived the study skills course as ineffective for African American students as it was implemented in the curriculum.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The educational journey from pre-school through high school can be quite challenging. In pre-school and elementary school, students often receive individualized instruction from teachers during the learning process. In addition, students may spend several periods each day with the same teacher and classmates. However, in middle school, students are likely to become mobile as they move from class to class to take courses from teachers in specialized areas.

High school offers even more challenges. Students are actively engaged in determining which courses they take; their courses are taught by different teachers and the students in their classes change from period to period. In this environment, students must make two rapid adjustments. First, they must become comfortable and efficient with the greater autonomy and responsibility presented by large and often impersonal high schools (Ford, Obiakor, and Patton, 1995). Second, they must adjust to a wide array of teaching styles, instructional techniques, and class formats. In some classes, the teachers may rely primarily on lecture and the instructional methods may be best suited for passive learners. In other classes, hands-on and interactive activities may predominate and technology may hold a central role in the instructional method. Students not only have to know how to listen, take notes, and outline information, but also have the skills to approach problems, reason both deductively and inductively, work in pairs or teams, investigate alternatives, and think critically. It is also likely that the students will need to learn to use technology for a variety of purposes, and to make their own meaning from the information available. In short, to survive in these challenging
settings, high school students are likely to need sophisticated skills for studying and learning which are applicable in varied contexts to succeed in their new environment.

**Study Skills Courses**

Typically, incoming high school freshmen are advised by guidance counselors and parents to choose classes which will help them satisfy requirements for graduation. Once classes have been selected and assigned, students prepare for classes by obtaining required materials and implementing study skills strategies which in turn are likely to increase their likelihood of academic success.

Study skills encompass a broad range of abilities which facilitate academic achievement in an equally broad range of subject areas. Some of the more common study skills strategies students use are motivational techniques, time management skills, note taking skills, test taking skills, organizational skills, and study habit skills (Haynes, 1993). Study skills also include critical thinking skills and the ability to employ logic to solve problems (Devine, 1981). Study skills include the ability to recognize root words in teacher-made and standardized tests (Friedman & Rowls, 1980); the ability to skillfully use libraries and reference materials to locate information (Irving, 1985); and the ability to read maps and graphs to interpret information (French, 1986).

According to the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1984), many students are unsuccessful in school because they lack effective study skills. To counter this, the commission recommends that study skills be introduced to students very early in the schooling process and continue throughout a student’s educational career.

In a now classic study of study skills, Entwistle (1960) reported that students who voluntarily took a study skills course were more successful academically than similar
students who did not voluntarily take the course. Butcofsky (1991) reported that students
who have difficulty in college frequently have inadequate study habits that affect their
academic achievement. A central problem, he noted, was that many of these students had
not learned how to take effective notes and manage time for studying.

According to Elliot and Wendling (1996), 75% of students who are academic
underachivers have poor study habits and examination techniques. Haynes (1993)
reports that improving study skills techniques can enhance academic achievement for
students with poor study skills habits.

It has been argued that study skills should be taught at the high school level because
many high school students are deficient in reading, thinking, and study skills (Tonjes and
Zintz, 1981). Study skills are competency skills that students need to master the content
of their texts (Tonjes and Zintz, 1981). Mastery of study skills in reading, writing, and
mathematics helps enhance students’ academic abilities (Bragstad and Stumpf, 1982;
Devine, 1981). The lack of these skills can negatively impact academic achievement.

Purpose

Lomotey (1990) notes that African American students have consistently lagged behind
white students in academic achievement as measured by standardized tests. On average,
by the sixth grade, many African American students perform two or more years behind
white students in reading, mathematics, and writing skills and that one-third of African
American high school students take non-academic general courses instead of academic
courses. Enrolling in non-academic general courses may not sufficiently prepare these
students for standardized tests or challenging courses, such as biology, geometry, and
advanced mathematics. It is also possible that one of the reasons African American
students do not perform academically as well as their white counterparts on standardized tests is because of lack of mastery of study skills.

If a lack of good study skills is a meaningful source of the underachievement of African American students, teaching them these skills may help remedy this problem. A study skills course can perhaps teach African American students how to stay motivated in learning. It may also teach them how to read for comprehension, take effective notes, and use critical thinking skills in their courses. If training in study skills can impact the performance of these students, then many long-term benefits may result. Students who experience success are more likely to take additional challenging coursework, which will increase the likelihood of future success in these courses, and so on. Learning study skills may be a starting point for reduction of the historic achievement discrepancy between African American and white students.

The purpose, then, of this study is to examine the perceptions of the effectiveness of a study skills course on the academic achievement of African American students.

Statement of the Problem

In 1987, recognizing widespread underachievement of public school students in Louisiana, educators and political leaders in the state launched several statewide initiatives designed to improve the educational performance of the state’s students. One such initiative was launched by the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). This initiative, “The Dynamics of Effective Study,” was intended to help students succeed in high school (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987) by providing them with essential study skills. According to documents produced by BESE, the “Dynamics of Effective Study” course was designed to help students “learn how to
learn” so that they can become effective, well-organized, and self-directed learners (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987). This course was offered in many schools around the state, including selective admissions high schools interested in improving their retention rates, especially for low income and minority students. This study is focused on the experiences at one such school. The school is recognized around the state as being a school of academic excellence. However, it is concerned with improving the educational performance of African American students. The problem of this study was to determine students’, teachers’, and administrators’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school. The specific research question addressed is as follows: Are there differences in the students’, teachers’, and administrators’ perceptions of effectiveness of the “Dynamics of Effective Study” course? If so what are they? Why do they exist?

Background

One dedicated academic magnet high school, the school in which this study took place, lost 50% of African American freshmen because they did not attain the required grade point average to remain at the school (Admissions Records, 1997). It is important to note that these students were academically successful prior to attending this dedicated academic magnet high school. The African American freshmen entered this high school with cumulative grade point averages of 2.5 or greater on a 4.0 scale and average reading stanine scores of 5 or greater on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) (Admissions Records, 2002).

To help African American freshmen enhance their academic achievement, a study
skills course was available as an elective. The name of the study skills course is "Dynamics of Effective Study." The objective of the course was to teach students how to effectively use study skills to achieve academically in each class. These skills were to be used throughout high school.

Some of the African American freshmen voluntarily enrolled in the study skills course to help them maintain the required 2.5 or greater grade point average. By implementing the study skills learned from the “Dynamics of Effective Study” course, it is hoped that successful African American freshmen will be able to maintain the average required until they reach their final goal of graduating from this dedicated academic magnet high school.

“Dynamics of Effective Study”

The Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), concerned about the low level of student achievement, concluded that high school students possessed inadequate study skills (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987). The “Dynamics of Effective Study” course was designed to aid freshmen to become academic achievers in all courses.

The “Dynamics of Effective Study” course focused on eleven essential knowledge acquisition skills: motivation, critical thinking, dictionary/root words, graphic skills, note taking, library skills, logic, outlining/mapping, PQ5R, test taking, and time management. The “Dynamic of Effective Study” was offered as an elective course to freshmen at the dedicated academic magnet high school in southeast Louisiana that provides the context for this study.
Research Questions

The overall question of this study is: Are there differences in the students’, teachers’, and administrators’ perceptions of effectiveness of the “Dynamics of Effective Study” course? If so, what are they? Why do they exist?

Twenty sub-level questions were addressed by students and fourteen sub-level questions were addressed by teachers and administrators. See Appendix A for the student questionnaire and Appendix B for the teacher/administrator questionnaire.

The first set of questions that was used in this study focused on the experiences of students who elected to take the course. The specific research questions addressed were as follows:

1. What influenced African American students to take the study skills course?
2. What specific strategies did African American students learn from the study skills course?
3. How has the study skills course affected the students’ academic achievement?

The second set of questions that was used in this study focused on the impact of the course on academic related outcomes for African American students. It entailed a comparative study of students who completed the study skills course with similar students who did not. Similarity was defined as a result of a matching process in which student participants in the course were matched with student non-participants on gender, entrance grade point average, entrance reading stanine score on a standardized test, and class level.

The specific research questions addressed in this portion of the study were as follows:

4. What factors have been obstacles to students’ success?
5. What factors have contributed to students’ success?

6. What study skills are used by students?
   a) How do students prepare for quizzes and tests?
   b) What do students do in classes in which the teacher lectures?
   c) What processes do students use in learning new information?
   d) What are the students’ weekly activities for preparing for school including the weekend?
   e) What processes do students use for studying including the amount of time they study weekly?
   f) What do students do when they are introduced to unfamiliar concepts?
   g) How do students display information has lots of information or is difficult to understand with words?
   h) What do students do to develop critical thinking skills?
   i) What do students do to comprehend information?
   j) How do students prepare for reports and writing assignments?

7. Was the study skills course effective?

Definition of Terms

**Academic Achievement.** Academic Achievement is the GPA that students must maintain to continue their studies at this high school. Students must maintain a 2.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale during their freshman through junior years.

**Attrition.** Attrition is the loss of students after enrolling in ninth grade due to transfers or dropping out of high school.
**Carnegie Units.** Carnegie units are courses approved by the Louisiana State Department of Education for high school graduation.

**Cohort.** Cohort is the grade classification of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

**Dedicated Academic Magnet School.** A dedicated academic magnet high school is one which has no students automatically assigned to it because of their residence in the attendance zone of that school.

**“Dynamics of Effective Study.”** “Dynamics of Effective Study” is a course designed to help students “learn how to learn.” Students are taught skills that enable them to become effective, well-organized, and self-directed learners. The course focused on eleven essential known acquisition skills. Emphases are placed on fundamental grammar, writing and math skills (Course Directory, 1996-97).

**Homework.** Homework is the study, work, and assignments students do at home, in study hall, or in the library when teachers do not supervise them.

**Magnet School.** A magnet school is a school offering one or more specialty programs in order to attract students from outside the neighborhood attendance zone with the objective of improving the racial balance within the school (Steel & Levine, 1994).

**Magnet School Program.** A magnet school program is a district wide program in which one or more magnet schools are offered as options for students to promote desegregation (Steel & Levine, 1994).

**Majority.** Majority is a representation of students who are not African American, Asian, or immigrant students.
Minority. Minority is a representation of students who are African American, Asian, or immigrant students.

Note-taking. Note-taking is a statement in writing of the main points, themes, and topics that are heard or read.

Probationary Students. Probationary students are students who did not meet retention requirements the previous school year, appealed to return, and were granted the appeal to return to the school (Admissions Records, 1998).

Qualified Students. Qualified students are students who have a minimum 2.5 overall grade point average on a 4.0 scale for the last five semesters of school, a minimum reading stanine score of five from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), a ninety-five percent attendance record, compliance with school board regulations and residency within the southern half of the parish (Admissions Records, 1998).

Stand-alone Public Magnet Schools. Schools that are not schools-within-schools (Gamoran, 1996).

Stanine Scores. Stanine scores are scores that range from one to nine. The average score is five. These scores rank students’ abilities and performances in various academic skill areas.

Study Skills. Study skills are the competencies associated with acquiring, organizing, remembering, recording, synthesizing, and using ideas and information found in school (Devine, 1987).

Significance of the Study

A large attrition rate exists among African American students at this dedicated academic magnet high school in southeast Louisiana. For the midterm of the 1997-98
school year, 55% of African American ninth graders, 37% of African American tenth
graders and 26% of African American eleventh graders did not acquire the minimum 2.5
grade point average needed to remain in attendance at this school. This is in contrast to
13% of non-African American ninth graders, 6% of non-African American tenth graders
and 18% of non-African American eleventh graders who did not acquire the minimum
2.5 grade point average (See Table 1.1). Both groups have the same admission
requirements to enroll. An intervention course entitled “Dynamics of Effective Study”
was designed to decrease the attrition rate of the African American students and satisfy a
court order to create a 50% African American and 50% non-African American student
body at this dedicated academic magnet high school in southeast Louisiana. This study
examined the students’, teachers’, and administrators’ perceptions of effectiveness of the
“Dynamics of Effective Study” course on the academic achievement of African
American students.

A search of related literature did not yield any studies which focused on this issue.
This study, therefore, contributes to the research of students’, teachers’, and
administrators’ perceptions of effectiveness of a study skills course at a dedicated
academic magnet high school.

Table 1.1

<table>
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CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The transition from middle school to high school can be quite difficult for many students. Students and parents select schools that fit their educational and social needs (Rossell, 1990). The freshman year of high school can determine whether students graduate, drop out, or transfer to other schools (Fine, 1987). Because of socioeconomics, race, gender, and academic performances, students enter high school with varied levels of academic achievement (Shujaa, 1996).

Many high schools develop curricula to enhance the academic achievement of students. Some (e.g., magnet high schools) have specialty programs to enhance the academic achievement of the students (Wincek, 1995). Success breeds success. Successful freshmen are more likely to complete high school than unsuccessful freshmen.

It has been found that a study skills course offered to freshmen high school students can enhance the academic achievement of students. According to Entwistle (1960), students can improve academically when they voluntarily enroll in a study skills course. Students learn how to succeed at every grade level by implementing the study skills techniques learned in a study skills course (Irving, 1985). When effectively used, study skills can impact the retention and graduation rates of high school students.

A dedicated academic magnet high school in southeast Louisiana implemented a study skills course in its curriculum to enhance the academic achievement of freshmen. This magnet school specializes in academics and offers a college preparatory curriculum. One objective of this school is to attain a 50% African American student population and a
50% non-African American student population. The student population is governed by a district court order from the parish. For the midterm of 1997, 33% of the freshmen class did not meet the school’s minimum 2.5 grade point average (GPA), which all students including freshmen must maintain (Admissions Office, 1997). During the same term, fifty percent of African American freshmen failed to meet the grade point average criterion (Admissions Office, 1997).

The purpose of this study was to determine the students’, teachers’, and administrators’ perceptions of effectiveness of the “Dynamics of Effective Study,” course.

A comprehensive search was conducted to find research on the effects of a study skills course on the academic achievement of African American freshmen at an academic magnet high school. The Library of Congress search on Louisiana on Line Access (LOLA), Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), and dissertation abstracts were used to retrieve journals, books, microfiche, and publications for this study. A review of the literature revealed that there has not been any research on the effects of study skills courses on African American students at academic magnet high schools. This study will add to the literature about effects of study skills courses on African American students at academic magnet high schools in urban settings in the South.

The review of the literature addressed factors related to: (1) the academic achievement and retention of African American high school students; (2) the goal theory; (3) magnet high schools and student success; and (4) study skills courses in high schools.
Factors Related to the Academic Achievement and Retention of African American High School Students

Research indicates that many determinants affect the academic achievement of African American high school students. These factors can be categorized into three areas: family background, student traits, and school factors (Shujaa, 1996).

Family Background

Family socioeconomic status, family expectations (Conley, 1999), and parents’ academic involvement (Tucker, 1999; Yan, 1999) impact the academic achievement of African American high school students.

Students of high socioeconomic status generally perform better academically than students of low socioeconomic status (Tucker, 1999). The greater the socioeconomic resources of students, the better the level of academic performance when all else is constant (Luster & McAdoo, 1994). Students of high socioeconomic status are eight times more likely to graduate from college than students of low socioeconomic status (Newman, Meyers, Newman, Lohman, & Smith, 2000). However, many African American students come from impoverished communities. Of those that do come from low income households, many are underachievers.

The expectations from families can enhance or discourage students from achieving in school. Many African American students perform better academically when their parents expect them to do well in school (Irvine, 1990; Tucker, 1999). As noted in a student essay for Louisiana State University High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (Ekeler, 1997), education was important to this student because of his family expectations:

Throughout the history of my family, it has been taught that education is a necessary tool for success in life. Therefore, education has never been viewed as optional but mandatory. The unspoken rule is that after high school, you enroll in
The student was an African American honor student at his high school when he wrote this essay. His family expected him to succeed. They had achievement-related family rules that impacted the academic achievement of their children (Tucker, 1999).

In the African American family, the family is often extended to other relatives and community members. African American high school students who do well academically have parents, relatives, and association with community members including churches who value and support education (Lomotey, 1990; Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman, & Smith, 2000; Hale, 2001). They encourage students to stay in school, perform to their highest abilities, and continue their education beyond high school so that they can benefit economically from the education that they have received (Yan, 1999).

African American students who live in communities with African Americans who are high school graduates are more likely to succeed in high school than those who live in communities with African Americans who dropped out of high school.

Another factor that impacts the academic achievement of students is family support (Lamborn, Brown, Mounts & Steinberg, 1992; Kunjufu, 1988). Regardless of the socioeconomic status of the family, students improve academically when their parents continue the learning process at home (Ianni, 1987; Clark, 1983; Luneburg & Irby, 1999). The parents become supervisors of their children’s curriculum (Irvine, 1990). Parents that inspire, support, care for, and sustain their children in education, help them succeed academically (Comer, 1980; Ford, Obiakor, & Patton, 1995; Hale, 2001). When they transmit consistency and hope, are complimentary, and are the primary educators of their children, children perform well in school (Clark, 1983; Irvine, 1990).
Clark (1983) found that high achieving African American students had parents who implemented “sponsored independence” parenting styles. Their parents had high expectations for their children’s present school success. They also had expectations for their children to attend college. The parents talked to their children often, expected good behavior and gave concise and consistent rules regarding their behavior, visited their children’s schools often, and instructed their children at home.

The low achieving students had parents who implemented “unsponsored independence” parenting styles. Their parents had low expectations for their children’s present school success (Kunjufu, 1988). They did not expect their children to attend college. They did not give concise and consistent rules regarding their behavior, did not establish boundaries of parent and child roles, seldom visited their children’s schools, and did not monitor the way their children spent their time (Clark, 1983).

**Student Traits**

African American high school students who are motivated by achievement, have coping skills, and have high educational and occupational expectations perform better in school (Pollard, 1989; Tucker, 1999).

Adams & Singh (1998) contend that African American females are more motivated to achieve academically than African American males. Females take more courses in mathematics, English, science, and foreign language and spend more time on homework than males (Adams & Singh; 1998).

means giving up their culture and identity. They correlate high academic achievement with “acting white” and prefer to underachieve to fit in socially with other African Americans (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Whitmore (1986) found that African American students’ concerns to fit in socially, to perform tasks, and to satisfy the cultural expectations of their parents and teachers hindered their academic self-concept.

Ford (1996) found that African American students had high expectations for achievement, but their behaviors were inconsistent with achieving academically. Some of the behaviors that may impact the retention rate of African American high school students are the amount of time students spend reviewing materials (Kunjufu, 1988), school attendance (Davis, 1994), study skills habits (Devine, 1981) and course selections (Adams & Singh, 1998).

The study time per week among African Americans is six hours compared to Asian Americans who spend twelve hours studying, and European Americans who spend eight hours studying (Kunjufu, 1988). African American males who attend school regularly and spend a considerable amount of time completing homework enhance their academic achievement (Davis, 1994).

Haynes (1993) recommends that the use of good study skills can enhance the academic achievement of African American high school students. French (1986) suggests that students should use the SQ3R formula (Survey, Question, Read and underline, Recite and write, and Review) for reading assignments, implement problem solving for writing research papers, and develop strategies for taking tests. Tucker (1999) found that poor study skills can contribute to academic failure; therefore, schools and parents should implement study skills throughout the children’s education. Haynes
(1993) contends that controlling anxiety during testing is important to the academic success of African American students.

Overall, African American students consistently enroll in general courses rather than academic courses (Irvine, 1990). Students who take academic and advanced courses performed academically better than students who did not take these courses (Adams & Singh, 1998).

African American students who perceive themselves as high achievers are actively engaged in academic work, as well as school activities. Low achieving students are not as involved in school activities as high achievers (Pollard, 1989). Pollard (1989) found that academic self-concept, perceived academic support and opportunities for success were factors that affected the academic achievement of African American students in inner city schools. The measure of academic achievement in the examination of these factors was grade point averages (GPAs). Academic self-concept was found to be the best predictor of grade point averages. Perceived academic support and perceived opportunities for success in academics were found to be significantly associated with grade point averages. Students who perceived that opportunities exist beyond high school because of high academic achievement performed better academically in high school than students who rejected these perceptions.

School Factors

High expectations (Edmonds, 1979), curriculum (Adams & Singh, 1998; Irvine), tracking (Franklin, 1989), disciplinary practices (Irvine, 1990), and teachers’ cultural characteristics (Ladson-Billings, 1994) impact the academic achievement and retention rate of African American high school students.
Schools that have high expectations and high standards of achievement for African American high school students affect the academic achievement of students (Edmonds, 1979). Hale (2001) found that African American students had high academic achievement when they attended schools that held high standards for academics and were not easy schools. The instruction was vigorous, captivating, and variable. The use of multimedia and multimodal teaching strategies can enhance the academic achievement of African American high school students (Banks, McQuater, & Sonne, 1995; Hale, 2001). When teachers perceive students as low achievers, the students are likely to underachieve (Franklin, 1989).

One of the most detrimental practices that has miseducated African American students is tracking (Chunn, 1989; Franklin, 1989). The homogeneous ability grouping has resulted in maintenance stratification (Irvine, 1990). Students with similar abilities are easy to maintain and teach (Chunn, 1989). Students with high abilities perform better academically than students with low abilities. Less experienced teachers generally teach students in low-ability groups (Braddock II, 1995). The lower-ability tracks negatively affect the academic achievement of African American high school students (Franklin, 1989). Combined with race and class, low socioeconomic students are placed in the lowest ability groups (Eyler, Cook & Ward, 1983; Metz, 1978; Oakes, 1985). Mickelson (1999) suggests that detracking can create intellectual and equitable learning opportunities for African American high school students.

Many African American students experience rejection, alienation and severe disciplinary practices, which may then encourage more student misbehavior, and lead to suspensions and expulsions from school (Irvine, 1990). Absence that results from
suspensions and expulsions affects the academic achievement of these students. African American students perform well academically when the teachers uphold high standards for behavior (Brookover et al., 1978; Eubanks & Levine, 1977). Students with good behavior are able to benefit from the lessons by staying on task with the given assignments.

The cultural characteristics of teachers and students can have a profound affect on the academic achievement of African American students (Hale, 1982; Newmann, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Cultural misunderstandings between teachers and students can result in distrust, conflict, hostility, suspensions, and possible school failure for African American students (Irvine, 1990). The small ratio of African American teachers also contributes to the lack of synchronization between teachers and African American students (Ford & Harris, III, 1999). White teachers have more negative perceptions and expectations of African American students than do African American teachers and relate to African American students less (Irvine, 1990). The higher the percentage of African American teachers in a school, the higher the academic achievement of African American students (Polinard & Wrinkle, 1995).

Teachers’ locus of control affects the academic achievement of African American males (Davis, 1994). Delpit (1988) found that African American males perform better academically when their teachers are strict, caring, supportive, and insist that they perform academically. According to Polite & Davis (1999) and Davis (1994), expert teachers of African American males are persistent in teaching students until they learn. The teachers are able and willing to solve complex problems, and have productive relationships with the students because they require African American males to work
collaboratively in a cooperative and supportive classroom environment. The students are engaged in critical thinking skills in the learning process (Davis, 1994).

Polite & Davis (1999) suggest that African American male students will improve academically if they are respected by their teachers and are taught with structure, clear instructions, and discipline. Davis (1994) contends that remediation, retention, and suspension contribute to the underachievement of African American high school males. Many African American males drop out of high school when they are retained (Davis, 1994). Teachers should learn as much about the community in which the African American males live so that they can teach the course content that is relevant to the real world of African American males. Teachers should develop meaningful relationships with African American males regardless of their social class, background, or ethnicity (Barnes, 1992). Teachers and counselors should help African American males in selecting career options and help them fulfill the course requirements for their options (Polite & Davis, 1999).

Summary of Factors Related to the Academic Achievement and Retention of African American High School Students

Research indicates that several determinants affect the academic achievement of African American students. They are family background, student traits, and school factors (Shujaa, 1996). Although all of these factors impact the academic achievement of African American high school students, debate exists about what factors have the greatest positive impact on the academic achievement of these students (Shujaa, 1995). Extensive research on high achieving academic African American high school students can give us more insight on how to enhance the academic achievement of all African American high school students.
Goal Theory

The goal theory states that students use self-regulatory activities and meaningful cognitive strategies to increase learning or task goals (Miller, Behrens, & Greene, 1993). Students participate in self-regulatory activities to help them succeed when they believe that they can succeed (Dweck, 1990). They have positive self-perceptions of their abilities, participate in tasks to achieve their goals, and are motivated to accomplish their goals (Dweck, 1990).

Self-perception of ability influences the students’ levels of participation in tasks (Miller, Greene, Montalvo, Ravindran & Nichols, 1996). The students’ perceived beliefs of ability to succeed are assessed by their willingness to attempt the tasks, the amount of effort expended with the tasks, and their persistence to accomplish the tasks (Bandura, 1986). Those beliefs impact their academic achievement (Pajares, 1996). Students who are goal oriented use activities to help them achieve academically. They use time management, study time, and tutor assistance to help them learn (Nolen, 1988). Shunk & Zimmerman (1994) contend that there is a correlation between academic achievement, retention, and cognitive strategies (e.g., self-regulation, effort, and persistence).

In relation to this study, African American freshmen who enrolled in the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study Skills,” chose a self-regulated activity to help them succeed academically. Study skills (e.g., motivation, critical thinking, dictionary/root words, graphic skills, note taking, library skills, logic, outlining/mapping, PQ5R, test taking skills, and time management) were taught to help them learn how to learn in every class (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987).
Magnet High Schools

The Societal and Historical Context

The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision in 1954 set precedence to eliminate discrimination and segregation throughout our nation’s schools (Estes & Waldrip, 1977; Rossell, 1990). The purpose for desegregating schools was to eliminate *de jure* discrimination against African American students so that they could receive the same educational opportunities as white students (Stave, 1995). School districts, primarily southern districts, were required to discontinue dual systems and school assignments based on race, but racial balance across schools was never enforced. Many southern school districts maintained racially segregated schools (Rossell & Hawley, 1983).

Northern school districts had a different legal segregation problem than southern school districts. These districts encountered *de facto* school segregation caused by residential segregation. Many districts adopted “majority to minority” transfer programs allowing students to voluntarily transfer to schools in which their race was a minority. However, few whites transferred to minority schools. As a result of this, the *Green v. New Kent County School Board* decision in 1968 set the tone for establishing remedies for integrated schools. School districts developed desegregation plans that mandated African American and white students to transfer from one-race schools to opposite-race schools (Heubert, 1999).

To satisfy constitutional requirements for desegregation, magnet schools were developed in public school systems as part of court-adopted desegregation orders to attract students of all races and economic levels (Blank, Dentler, Baltzell, & Chabotar,

Magnet schools are public schools that offer special curricular themes and instructional methodologies in order to attract students with the objective of improving the racial balance within the school (Steel & Levine, 1994). They are the most widely used methods of desegregation (Wells, 1993).

The first magnet schools in American public education evolved in Philadelphia in the seventies through the voluntary enrollment of students in large urban districts (Blank, Dentler, Baltzell, & Chabota, 1983; Estes & Waldrip, 1978). They were modeled from well-known specialty schools such as the Bronx High School of Science, the Boston Latin School, Lane Tech in Chicago, and San Francisco Lowell High School (Blank, R., Dentler, R., Baltzell, D., & Chabota, K., 1983; Blank, Levine, & Steel, 1996). These schools had themes in mathematics, the performing arts, and science, and voluntary admissions, allowing students to choose programs based on their themes (Estes & Waldrip, 1978; Blank, Levine, & Steel, 1996). There was no testing for admissions.

As magnet schools became popular in the northern districts for desegregation, a variety of themes were developed to attract students to their specialized educational programs (Clune & Witte, 1990; Salomone, 2000). These themes included health science, humanities, foreign language, computer science, and business management (Blank, Dentler, Baltzell, & Chabota, 1983).

In 1975 in *Morgan v. Kerrigan*, magnet programs were incorporated as desegregation
tools for the Boston schools (Smrekar & Goldring, 1999). This was a voluntary
desegregation plan providing parents with a variety of magnet program themes:
the humanities, career exploration, languages, basic skills, open classroom, accelerated
learning, alternative education, and individualized education (Blank, Levine, & Steel,
1996). Most of the voluntary desegregation plans occurred in the North.

Magnet school programs were expanded in 1975-76 by the courts for desegregation.
These programs provided the improvement of the quality of education for students by
enhancing competition among its student body (Blank, 1987).

In 1976, the U.S. Congress passed an amendment to the Emergency School Aid Act
(ESAA) to support desegregation by providing grants to plan and implement magnet
schools (Blank, Dentler, Chabota, 1983; Salomone, 2000). The Magnet Schools
Assistance Program was established in 1985 to continue funding magnet schools
(Salomone, 2000). The funding aided the increase of magnet school programs (Wells,
1993) along with the Hawkins-Stafford Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary
Act in 1988 (Steel & Levine, 1994). In 1999, the federal Department of Education
funded over one hundred million dollars for magnet school assistance (Salomone, 2000).

In a 1991 national study of magnet schools, Blank, Levine, & Steel (1996) listed
magnet high schools by their specialty themes and instructional methodology: career
vocational themes comprised 43% of magnet high school programs, subject matter
themes comprised 26% of the magnet high school programs; instructional approach
comprised 12% of the magnet high school programs; gifted and talented themes
comprised 11% of the magnet high school programs, and the arts comprised 8% of the
themes for magnet high school programs. Magnet high schools comprised twenty percent of the magnet school programs in public schools across America in 1991.

Districts with magnet programs are greatest in the Northeast, Midwest, and West regions. The largest urban districts with magnet schools exist in the Southeast (Blank, Dentler, Baltzell, & Chabotar, 1983).

**Characteristics**

Magnet schools can operate as independent schools with a single purpose and have a better chance of surviving than other schools (Young, 1990). They focus on academics, career paths, or instructional approaches (Blank, Steel, & Levine, 1996). Magnet schools provide parents with a variety of choices within a district that have magnet school programs (Algozzine, Yon, Nesbit, & Nesbit, 1999). The U. S. Department of Education reported that 54% of large urban school districts have magnet school programs as an integral part of their desegregation plan.

Magnet schools can be established voluntarily or they can be mandated by law (Rossell, 1990). A magnet school under a voluntary plan is a school in which the primary purpose for formation is to desegregate the school through voluntarism (Rossell, 1990). The creative and performing arts programs enroll mostly white students in voluntary magnet programs. Few gifted and talented programs are established in minority communities under the voluntary magnet plan (Rossell, 1990). A magnet school under a voluntary plan is the most equitable, effective, and efficient plan. It is the most equitable plan because it gives African American and white parents equal opportunities to choose the magnet program of their children’s interest. It is the most effective plan of desegregation because it produces the greatest interracial exposure among students. It is
the most efficient plan because it has the greatest number of students assigned to the program compared to mandated magnet programs and freedom of choice schools (Rossell, 1990).

Blank, Levine, & Steel (1996) found that sixty-one percent of the students enrolled in magnet school programs were African American, Hispanic, or other minority from the 1991-92 survey of magnet schools.

A magnet school under a mandatory plan is a school in which students are assigned to other-race schools to achieve desegregation. Parents have two options with this plan. They can either leave the school system or they are forced to send their children to desegregated schools. A court or board assigns enrollment based on race and residence. A magnet school under a mandatory plan will use a “lottery” for enrollment to conduct a fair enrollment process and to satisfy parents. Under the mandatory plan, college preparatory and gifted and talented programs are generally established in minority communities but the majority of the students that participate in these programs are white students. There are more dedicated high schools under the mandatory magnet plan than the voluntary plan, but the fundamental magnet and basic skills/individualized magnets are the most popular magnet programs under the mandatory plan (Rossell, 1990).

Magnet schools have two types of magnet school structures: a school structure that includes all students in the magnet program and another structure that has a magnet program within the school which does not include the entire student body (Rossell, 1990; Steel & Levine, 1994). A program that includes only part of the student body in the magnet program is a “school within a school” (SWAS) (Smrekar & Goldring, 1999). Rossell (1990) and Steel & Levine (1994) call this type of magnet structure a “program
within a school” (PWS). Thirty-two percent of the nation’s schools are whole school magnets (Blank, Levine & Steel, 1996). One example of a whole school magnet program is a dedicated magnet school. The dedicated magnet school enrolls the entire student body but there is no assigned neighborhood attendance.

An attendance-zone magnet school enrolls students who live in the regular attendance zone and students within the district. Twenty-six percent of magnet schools nationwide are attendance zone magnets (Blank, Levine, & Steel, 1996). In the 1991 National Magnet Study, magnet schools existed as follows: 69% of magnet schools have programs within school programs, 27% of magnet schools have whole school – dedicated programs, 3% of magnet schools have whole school – attendance zone programs, and 1% of magnet schools’ programs are unknown.

Most magnet schools do not have selective admission requirements. Over half of the magnet programs have waiting lists (Douzenis, 1994). However, some magnet schools have admission requirements. Some requirements are based on grades, test scores, and race (Young, 1990). Young (1990) found that magnet schools cost between ten and twelve percent more to operate than traditional schools. Magnet schools receive more funding for curricula and instruction than schools that are not magnet schools (Moore & Davenport, 1989). They often attract the best students from traditional schools, but critics contend that this process creates segregation in other school programs in the district with fewer role models of high achieving students among these schools. It can also affect academic expectations among administrators, faculty, and staff (Young, 1990).

Magnet schools can operate as independent schools with a single purpose and have a better chance of surviving than other schools (Young, 1990). They focus on academics,
career paths, or instructional approaches (Blank, Levine, & Steel, 1996). Magnet schools provide parents with a variety of choices within a district that have magnet school programs (Algozzine, Yon, Nesbit, & Nesbit, 1999). The U. S. Department of Education reported that 54% of large urban school districts have magnet school programs as an integral part of their desegregation plan.

Many of the teachers in magnet schools are experienced and committed to the specialty program of the school. In some districts, seniority is not given the same consideration in teacher assignment in magnet schools as in schools that are non-magnet. In high schools, 36% of the school districts have smaller class sizes. Only 3% have larger classes. The lower average class size allows for additional staffing which permits lower student/teacher ratios (Steel & Levine, 1994). Teachers can be selected based on their certification and interests in the magnet program themes or instructional approach (Blank, Levine, & Steel, 1996).

High quality magnet school programs have an innovative, entrepreneurial principal; a coherent theme, curriculum, and staff; and support to implement the program from the district (Blank, Dentler, Baltzell, & Chabotar, 1983). Strong leadership has been shown as a characteristic of magnet schools that have high academic performances and desegregated student populations (Henig, 1994).

In the 1980s and 1990s, other types of magnet schools evolved (Hakim, Seidenstat, & Bowman, 1994). These schools offer continuing education and learning centers for at-risk students (Hakim, Seidenstat, & Bowman, 1994). Magnet schools have become so successful that more than 60% of the students who apply for admissions cannot attend magnet programs because of limited space. Parents would send their children to private
schools if magnet schools were not accessible. Some parents remove their children from private schools to go to magnet schools when the opportunity arises (Algozzine, Yon, Nesbit, & Nesbit 1999).

**Academic Success**

Prince George’s County in the Washington, D.C. area experienced improved academic achievement among its student body after creating magnet schools in its district. In 1985, the district created 44 magnet schools. In 1989, the average scores on the California Achievement Test rose 20% in four years (Young, 1990).

In an investigation of four magnet high schools in Federal Region F, which included Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma, Scott and De Luna (1994) found that students in magnet schools have higher achievement outcomes than students who do not attend magnet schools. According to Bryant (1987), magnet schools reduce violence and vandalism, have better attendance rates than nonmagnet schools and have improved student achievement. Students have better attitudes toward school than students who do not attend magnet schools (Bryant, 1987).

Harris & Lowery (2002) contend that magnet schools enhance learning for students, provide high morale for teachers and staff, and unify communities. Students in magnet schools perform significantly better academically than students in non-magnet schools and are twice as likely to graduate from high school than other students.

Bailey (1987) reported that in a 1985 report of the Office of Educational Evaluation of the New York City Board of Education, five magnet high schools’ achievement and attendance levels increased. Bailey also found that The Sumner Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kansas City, Kansas, a magnet school for academically talented students, had
an exemplary record of student achievement. The school had high student participation in advanced placement college credits. Many of the students attended college.

Lyson & Walton (1988) found that student academic achievement for students in magnet schools was higher than that of students who were not in magnet schools in a minority school district in Maryland. Students in the magnet schools surpassed students in non-magnet schools by 10% in language, 6% in mathematics, and 8% in reading.

In a longitudinal study of over 1,000 students in four school districts, Musumecci & Szczypkowski (1991) found that students who were enrolled in magnet schools for a long period of time had a higher promotion rate and enrolled at a higher rate in college preparatory courses than students who were enrolled in the magnet school programs for a shorter period of time. They found that students performed better academically in long-term magnet school programs than in short-term or non-magnet programs.

In a 1988 longitudinal study of forty-eight stand-alone public magnet schools, two hundred thirteen comprehensive public schools, fifty-seven Catholic schools, and thirty-nine secular private schools, tenth grade students in magnet schools had higher achievement levels in reading, social studies, and science than comprehensive high schools (Gamaron, 1996).

The Citizen’s Commission on Civil Rights (1997) studied districts in St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Nashville. It was found that magnet schools improved the academic achievement levels of poor children in these districts.

Poppell & Hague (2001) found that students in the magnet school programs in Duval County, Florida had higher academic achievement levels than students in nonmagnet programs.
According to the 1983 United States Department of Education study of magnet schools in fifteen school districts by James H. Lowry Associates and Abt Associates (Blank, Dentler, Baltzell, & Chabotar, 1983), magnet schools provide a quality education in urban school systems. The study revealed that approximately one-third of the magnet schools provided a “high quality” education as measured by student learning opportunities, instructional quality, curriculum, student-teacher interaction, and the use of resources. Eighty percent of the thirty-two magnet schools had higher average achievement test scores than the district averages for students in the same grade levels. Students’ average reading and mathematics achievement scores were ten points above the district averages in over 40% of the schools. Twenty percent of the magnet schools had average student achievement scores over 30 points higher than the district average for the grade level. The attendance, dropout, suspension, and transfer rates had more positive outcomes than the district averages. In this study, it was also found that magnet schools had a significant positive impact on district-wide desegregation. Two-thirds of the magnet schools had full racial and ethnic desegregation, and 40% of the urban districts had positive results with desegregation.

Blank (1987) contends that magnet schools raise expectations and improve attitudes and aspirations of students. The New York State Education Department conducted a study in 1985 of forty-one magnet schools in eight school districts. In this study, student academic achievement and attendance significantly improved. The dropout rates decreased. Ninety-eight percent of the magnet schools had improved attendance rates. Most of the forty-one schools achievement levels were higher than their district averages (Young & Clinchy, 1992).
Doyle & Levine (1984) credit the academic achievement of magnet schools to student and parental interests and choice in magnet programs, commitment from students, parents, faculty, administration, staff, and the district to support the magnet curriculum, and admissions standards to determine the homogenous grouping by ability of the students allowed in the program. Thacker (1997) credits academic achievement to a strong administration, high expectations, a focused mission, clear instruction, safe and orderly environment, parental involvement, and usage of student achievement data for remediation. In a case study of eight magnet schools in Austin, Texas, the students in the senior high school Science Academy had higher academic achievement than non-magnet students in the district (Laws, 1987).

Disadvantages

In an investigation of four magnet high schools in Federal Region F, which included Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma, Scott and De Luna (1994) found that there is a persistent and consistent gap of achievement levels between minority and majority students at magnet schools. Minority students lag behind white students on grade point averages, national standardized tests, and state norm referenced tests (Scott & De Luna, 1994).

Ascher (1985) criticizes magnet schools for creating tracking systems in which minority students are placed in remedial and low track classes. Classes are racially segregated in many magnet schools even though the schools may be racially balanced. White students in magnet schools benefit more from the programs and resources than other students.
Gaines (1987) found that the Science Academy of Austin, a high school science, mathematics, and computer technology magnet program did not have any significant gains in the tenth-grade magnet students’ achievement in science compared to non-magnet schools in the district.

Gersti-Pepin (2002) contends that magnet schools do not improve the quality of education for African American students. In her case study of Northeast High School in Oklahoma City, a high school with a magnet program within the school’s program, during 1981-1985, all of the college preparatory classes were filled mostly by white students. She contends that NHS had two separate schools. One school, the magnet school, prepared white, middle class students for college and the other school served to classify the other students with a less challenging curricula. Only a select few succeeded.

Watson (1988) contends that magnet schools attract the best students and teachers and leave behind a “ghetto-within-a-ghetto” system of education for other students. The comprehensive, non-magnet high schools in the district have fewer student options and an inferior curriculum and quality of instruction.

Cookson (1994) describes magnet schools as ineffective for the entire educational system. In a study of Milwaukee schools, Cookson (1994) found that African American students were bused throughout the city to attend schools that did not have academic programs whereas white students were bused to attend magnet schools enriched with academic programs. He reports that few students benefit from magnet schools.

Shapiro & Cookson (1997) contend that middle class parents are more informed and motivated to enroll their children in magnet schools than lower-income parents. Middle class parents take advantage of educational options. Lower-income parents select
conventional schools with fewer resources and no specialized curriculums. Magnet schools tend to have more effective and innovative teachers and more academically motivated and able students than other programs in the district. Other public schools have a less rigorous curricula and lower expectations from teachers (Shapiro & Cookson, 1997). More money is spent on magnet schools compared to other schools in their districts (Shapiro & Cookson, 1997). Smrekar & Goldring (1999) report that districts with magnet schools receive ten percent more funding than nonmagnet schools. Three-fourths of the magnet programs receive extra funding. Magnet schools contribute to separate students based on socioeconomics when admission standards are selective and magnet schools are few. These criteria negatively impact the academic achievement of low socioeconomic students.

In the 1983-84 Ninth Annual Final Report of the Houston Independent School District, magnet schools did not enhance the academic achievement of students. This report studied seventy-eight magnet schools of all grade levels (Stanley, 1984).

One of the criticisms of magnet schools is that the highest academic achievers who attend magnet schools are removed from other schools in the district creating segregation and a system of underachievers in other schools in the district (Archibald, 1996). This process of enrolling high achievers, “creaming,” keeps middle-class students in the urban system (Thornton & Chunn, 1987-1988). The “creaming” process segregates lower class students who do not apply to magnet schools because of lack of information, time, and access to transportation to contact magnet schools (Archibald, 1996; Morris & Goldring, 1999). Supported by Schneider, Teske, & Marschall (2000), they found that “creaming” or “skimming” stratifies high- and low-performing schools. High-income parents focus
on academics whereas low income parents focus on nonacademic factors. High-income parents are more likely to enroll their children in high performing schools (e.g., magnet schools specializing in a college preparatory curriculum) compared to low-income parents who generally choose to enroll their children in low performing schools. Low-income parents have different experiences with the magnet school application process compared to high income parents. Low-income parents may not take advantage of the application process because of lack of transportation, misunderstanding of the process, lack of access to newspaper advertisements, and noncompliance of timelines for application. Jones (1998) contends that if all schools received 25% to 50% more funding, students could raise their achievement levels. Harris & Lowery (2002) contend that magnet schools have the greatest resources, families that are committed to educational excellence, and the most committed teachers.

Summary of Magnet High Schools

Magnet schools evolved in the seventies to desegregate public schools throughout our nation (Blank, Dentler, Baltzell, & Chabotar, 1983; Henig, 1994; Estes & Waldrip, 1977). Voluntary magnet plans and court-ordered magnet plans were implemented to provide educational excellence and desegregated schools for African American and non-African American students (Rossell, 1990). The various themes and instructional approaches have attracted students and parents to these programs. Strong leadership and an entrepreneurial principal contribute to the academic success of magnet schools. Together, they create a coherent theme, curriculum, and staff that positively impact the academic achievement of students (Henig, 1994). Research indicates that magnet programs have overall positively enhanced the academic achievement levels of students.
who attend them. In many studies magnet students have outperformed non-magnet students academically (Blank, 1987, Archibald, 1995, Heebner, 1995, Gamoran, 1996). Critics have noted that magnet programs “cream” or “skim” high achieving students from public schools leaving homogenous lower ability students in the system (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000). This system creates a tracking system leaving behind low ability students, less experienced teachers and low expectations of academic achievement (Shapiro & Cookson, 1997).

Study Skills Courses in High Schools

Development of Study Skills

The development of study skills occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Irving, 1985). Research on student-centered and individualized learning for secondary students became serious areas for research through the works of Gagne and other psychologists (Irving, 1985). Secondary study skills courses were modeled from student counseling services in universities and polytechnics to teach students how to learn (Irving, 1985).

According to the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), study skills should be introduced in the early years of education and continue throughout the student’s educational experience. Many of the study skills learned in middle school should be reinforced in high school to ensure students’ academic success (Rafoth, Leal, & DeFabo, 1993). In addition to those skills, new study skills should be introduced in high school to help students succeed in school.

Several researchers have found that study skills can enhance the academic achievement of students. In 1960, Entwistle reported that study skills improved the
student’s achievement level particularly when a student volunteered to participate in a study skills course. Entwistle’s findings were supported by Butcofsky (1971) and Rowher (1984), who recommended studying as a vital part of the learning process. They found that good students could improve their academic achievement levels by improving their study habits.

Several study skills techniques that affect student learning in secondary schools will be discussed: motivation, outlining/mapping, time management, test taking skills, SQ3R, PQ5R, note-taking skills, library skills, retention/memory, listening skills, comprehension, and studying.

Motivation

Academic success or failure can generate the feelings of competence or incompetence in students. These feelings can affect students’ performances by their willingness to continue to learn or give up. It is believed that students who have high achievement expectations attribute success to internal and external causes (Haynes, 1993).

There are several strategies that can be used to motivate students to learn: (1) identify students’ interests (Tonjes & Zintz, 1981); (2) identify attitudes of students in reading (Lewis & Teal, 1980); (3) choose materials that meet the interests, abilities, and attitudes of the students (Tonjes & Zintz, 1981); (4) give clear objectives of the lessons and assignments (Tonjes & Zintz, 1981); (5) allow students to choose the task and materials to complete the task and (6) allow students to set their own goals for achievement.

Outlining/Mapping

Outlining and mapping are systems of organizing information for learning. In outlining, information can be logically organized or categorically organized (Tonjes &
There are basically two types of notations used for outlining information: (1) a system of indentation using Roman numerals, Arabic numbers, and capitals; and (2) a numbering system (Tonjes & Zintz, 1981).

Mapping is a word picture of ideas. It helps students organize information. It is an alternative method of conventional notes and outlines (Bragstad and Stumpf, 1982).

**Time Management**

Bragstad and Stumpf (1982) suggest that students should prioritize time for tasks: (1) make a realistic schedule to assure that all of the tasks can be completed; (2) balance work with fun activities; (3) make a schedule and revise it if necessary to accomplish the tasks; (4) reward themselves for completing tasks; and (5) plan weekly reviews in their schedule to prepare for tests.

**Test Taking Skills**

Researchers suggest that there are several strategies that teachers can use to help students perform well on tests and reduce test anxiety: (1) provide examples of the types of questions that will be asked (Roe, Stoodt, & Burns, 1983); (2) teach students how to manage time during testing and how to use inductive and deductive reasoning to answer questions (McPhail, 1981); (3) teach students how to analyze questions (Gordon, 1982); (4) teach students how to eliminate multiple choice answers (Parrish, 1982); (5) teach students how to use a metacognitive script during testing. The student would use the metacognitive script to correctly interpret directions, questions, words, and the expected answers (Gordon, 1982); and (6) give practice tests to eliminate anxiety (Parrish, 1982).

Haynes (1993) contends that fear of failure is often correlated with test anxiety for
African American students, and that self-confidence is important for African American students when taking tests.

Seventy-five percent of students who perform poorly do so because of poor study habits and ineffective examination techniques (Elliott & Wendling; 1996).

**SQ3R**

SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) is a study technique that students can use to comprehend reading. When using this method for reading, students survey a book prior to reading it. They read the title, the introduction, the headings, and the summary. Students use questioning to interpret the material that has been read. They proceed to read, recite, and review the material. The review of the material can be done through mapping, flowchart, or outlining (French, 1986).

**PQ5R**

PQ5R is a textbook note-taking method. It is one of the study skills methods mandated by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. PQ5R stands for preview of materials; find answers for questions; read for understanding; record information for understanding; recite information to increase memory; review information for retention; and reflect on what has been given to regain retention.

**Note-taking Skills**

Rafoth, Leal, & DeFabo (1993) suggest that there are several kinds of note-taking techniques that students can use: (1) skeletal notes are notes that are given to students by the teacher prior to a lecture. These notes have spaces to allow students to fill in information during the lecture. Students who use this system generally score higher than students who use other note taking methods for lectures (Kiewra, 1985); (2) instructor’s
notes that the instructor gives to students (Rafoth, Leah, & DeFabio, 1983). Kiewra & Frank (1988) found that students who use the instructor’s notes do not perform well on immediate tests but do better when testing is delayed. Students perform better academically using the instructor’s notes when they have more time to study the notes (Rafoth, Leah, & DeFabio, 1983); (3) note-taking cues can be given to students. Teachers can teach students how to recognize cues. They can point to information on the board or use phrases as “First…,” “The reason for…,” “There are three causes…,” “An important finding was…,” (Rafoth, Leal, & DeFabio, 1983, p. 128); (4) transparencies are often used when the information is complex. Teachers can use transparencies to teach note-taking techniques to students by modeling the technique for students to use; (5) note-taking reviews can occur after lectures. The teacher can request the students to use their notes for answering questions. This is a technique to check students’ accuracy in note-taking (Rafoth, Leal, & DeFabio, 1983).

Students experience three developmental stages in taking notes when reading (Garner, 1990). The first stage is called strategically deficient. Students normally do not take notes while reading. They have difficulty identifying pertinent information. The second stage is strategically inefficient. Students copy what they read rather than paraphrase the information in their own words. The last stage is called efficient summarizers. Students only record pertinent information (Rafoth, Leal, & DeFabio, 1983).

Low academic achievers have difficulty determining what is important from lectures and are ineffective in taking notes. This difficulty hinders their ability to reach their full level of academic achievement (Palmaiter & Bennett, 1974). Sheinker & Sheinker
(1982) contend that note taking skills can be taught and turn low academic achievers to high academic achievers.

Library Skills

Devine (1981) contends that a successful study skills courses implement library skills as a learning strategy. Students should be taught and encouraged to use the library for research projects and personal use (Devine, 1981).

Retention/Memory

There are several strategies to help students remember information: (1) students should make the information meaningful to them; (2) students should organize information to determine the main ideas; (3) students should take notes to improve retention; (4) students should summarize information in their own words for retrieval; (5) students should discuss the information to review the main ideas; and (6) students should interact with the information and apply the concepts (Tonjes, 1981).

Listening Skills

Listening is basic to all learning (Devine, 1981). It is teachable and testable. There are strategies for teaching high school students how to be effective listeners (Devine, 1981). Pausing, fewer vocal hesitations, and the use of visual cues have been found to improve students’ listening in the classroom.

Comprehension

Students need to make sense of information to be able to understand its meaning (Devine, 1981). There are three stages of understanding: (1) perception, acceptance, and decoding; (2) organization; and (3) comprehension.
The reader has to interpret the author’s message in comprehension. Teachers can teach students how to comprehend information by: (1) recognizing vocabulary words in the assignment; (2) recognizing patterns and organizations of sentences; (3) recognizing unfamiliar concepts; (4) interpreting the writer’s message; and (5) recognizing the difference between the author’s and the reader’s background.

**Studying**

There are several study strategies that can be taught to students to help them learn how to study. These strategies help students organize, retrieve, and remember information (French, 1986): (1) students should understand the purpose and results of studying (Rowher, 1984); (2) students should focus on studying (Readence, Bean, & Baldwin, 1981); (3) students should process the information (Anderson & Armbruster, 1982); (4) students should be able to connect prior and new information (Mayer, 1984); (5) students should organize the information to study (Readence, Bean, & Baldwin, 1981); (6) students should encode the information for retrieval cues (Anderson & Armbruster, 1982); and (7) students should spend time studying to master the task (Readence, Bean, & Baldwin, 1981).

Perspectives on study habits can be behavioral, cognitive, or motivational (Haynes, 1993). The behavioral perspective of study skills addresses the environment, external conditions, and observable behaviors of students. Time management, note taking skills, and the time and place of study are factors that can affect learning. Haynes suggests that African American students need support and guidance from teachers and mentors to teach them these behaviors to enhance their academic achievement levels.
The cognitive perspective of study skills examines the process by which students acquire, store, and recall information from memory. From this perspective, students’ methods of processing information are recognized for their uniqueness, and because each student processes information differently, academic results are varied for student participants. Students are active learners in this process. They use imagery, verbalization, the grouping of concepts, and the organization of subject matter in the learning process (Haynes, 1993).

In the motivation perspective attribution, students equate success with competence and failure with incompetence. Students with high academic expectations believe they can succeed and link failure to external factors (Anderson and Armbruster, 1982; Haynes, 1993). Successful students become independent learners and are able to reach their expected levels of comprehension (Rafoth, Leal, & DeFabo, 1993).

Unsuccessful students can be taught how to become independent and successful learners. They can learn how to make adjustments with their study habits to enhance their levels of academic achievement (Rafoth, Leal & DeFabo, 1993). However, teaching these skills is quite difficult. Tabberer (1993) found that several problems can and do occur in study skills courses. He believes that it is difficult to teach these courses because there aren’t any written goals and objectives for these courses, materials are lacking, students do not fully exercise study skills habits, some of the advice is not sound, and there are different findings in research. It is difficult to determine the best method for teaching a study skills course.
“Dynamics of Effective Study”

Study skills have been taught at this dedicated academic magnet high school since the development of the magnet program; they were taught to all freshmen in their English and social studies classes from 1976 until 1993 (Admissions Office, 2002). In 1993 the course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” was offered to all freshmen as an elective course (Admissions Office, 2002). Because it is a voluntary elective course, all freshmen do not take the course. Through guidance from their parents, student choice, and recommendations from the counselor and director of admissions, students enroll in the course.

One-third of the freshmen at this dedicated academic magnet high school have difficulty succeeding academically (Admissions Office, 1997). More profoundly, fifty percent of the African American freshmen class was unsuccessful in achieving the required grade point average (GPA) during the midterm of 1997 (Admissions Office, 1987). All students must maintain a minimum 2.5 grade point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale to meet the grade point average (GPA) criteria of the school.

In Louisiana students, parents, principals, teachers, and other school personnel recognized that students had difficulty with study skills to prepare them to learn. Because of these concerns and lack of student achievement the “Dynamics of Effective Study” course was designed to aid students to learn how to learn in all courses (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987).

The “Dynamics of Effective Study” course incorporates skills needed to aid students in learning. The course focuses on eleven essential knowledge acquisition skills: motivation, critical thinking skills, dictionary/root words, graphic skills, note-taking
skills, library skills, logic, outlining/mapping, PQ5R, test taking skills, and time management.

**Motivation**

Students learn observation, listening, brainstorming, concentration, and organization skills to apply to the courses that they will take.

**Critical Thinking**

Critical thinking is a skill that students use to analyze information and ideas. Students assess, examine, and evaluate information for accuracy (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987).

**Dictionary/Root Words**

To help students learn how to communicate effectively with others, the “Dynamics of Effective Study” curriculum requires students to demonstrate vocabulary recognition in the content areas. A strong background in vocabulary increases root recognition (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987). To help students build vocabularies, the use of the dictionary and thesaurus are taught in the “Dynamics of Effective Study” course.

**Graphic Skills**

The new information culture has created another form of presenting information that can be readily interpreted. Bar graphs, circle graphs, pictographs, and straight line graphs are used to present complex and plentiful data. The development of these skills helps students interpret information for learning.

**Note-taking**

Getting accurate information to study is important in learning facts. Different classes require varied methods in note-taking. Recording information accurately and interpreting
information correctly help students learn what they need to learn. The Louisiana State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recommends the Cornell method for note-taking (1987). The Cornell method requires the student to divide the notepaper into two columns to take notes with the line 1/3 of the way from the left side of the paper. Notes are placed in the larger column of the paper. Students review the notes and place key words or phrases in the narrower column. Entries are dated. Students number information from their textbooks for references. This system allows students to rewrite notes in their own words with their own understanding.

**Library Skills**

Successful students know how to find information that they need. They learn how to use the library to conduct research to complete assignments.

**Logic**

Students are introduced to skills needed for distinguishing valid from invalid inferences. They understand rationalizing, reasoning, and the idea of degrees of belief.

**Outlining/Mapping**

An often overlooked study skill is getting ready to study. Outlining and mapping information can help students get information organized to study. Outlining and mapping involve: getting an overview of a course, book or chapter; prewriting essays; using maps or clusters to organize information graphically; and outlining chapters.

**PQ5R**

One of the methods mandated by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is to implement a study skill called PQ5R. PQ5R is a textbook note-taking method. PQ5R stands for preview of materials, find answers for questions; read for
understanding; record information for understanding; recite information to increase memory; review information for retention; and reflect on what has been given to regain retention.

**Test Taking**

Students are required to take tests throughout their educational experiences. Not only will they take tests for school, but they will also take tests for securing jobs and for promotions. The curriculum designed for test taking prepares students to organize their thoughts, and to express themselves logically and concisely. Students learn how to choose the best responses to questions. They are to recognize facts and definitions, and identify rules to help them determine what is correct and incorrect. Students learn how to match words, symbols, and phrases from one list or set of choices to another. Students fill in the blanks with correct phrases, words, numbers, dates, and symbols. They know how to use notes to answer questions. Students use previous logic, knowledge, and analytical skills to interpret or solve algebraic expressions and word problems. They are expected to recall and recite answers to questions. Students learn how to take standardized tests.

**Time Management**

Learning how to complete assignments on time will help students succeed academically. In the “Dynamics of Effective Study” students are taught how to organize and manage time wisely. Students are taught how to schedule tasks weekly and monthly to assure success.

To enhance the academic achievement of students, a study skills course was implemented in the curriculum to help students attain the GPA criteria. African
American freshmen have enrolled in this course since it was implemented in 1994. This study will examine the effectiveness of the course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on the academic achievement of African American freshmen at this school.

Summary of Study Skills Courses in High Schools

Research on study skills has been ongoing since the late 1950s and early 1960s. Several researchers have indicated that study skills should be taught in high school to help students succeed in school (Entwistle, 1960; Rafoth, Leal, & DeFabio, 1993). Motivation, outlining/mapping, time management, test taking skills, note-taking skills, SQ3R, PQ5R, library skills, retention/memory, listening, comprehension, and studying are study skills techniques that were reviewed in the literature. To enhance the academic achievement of students, a dedicated academic magnet high school implemented a study skills course to help students attain the GPA criteria. African American freshmen have enrolled in this course since it was implemented in 1994. This study will examine the effectiveness of the course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on the perceptions of students, teachers and administrators concerning the academic achievement and retention of African American freshmen at this school.

Summary of the Literature Review

Research indicates that several factors affect the academic achievement of African American high school students. Family background, student traits, and school factors are determinants that affect the academic achievement of African American students (Shujaa, 1996). Schools do not have control over family background or student traits, but they have control of the kinds of programs that they offer students.
Research indicates that magnet schools can enhance the academic achievement of students. In many magnet school studies, magnet students have outperformed non-magnet school students academically (Blank, 1987; Archibald, 1995; Heebner, 1995; Gamoran, 1996). However, at a dedicated academic magnet high school, approximately fifty percent of the African American freshmen did not attain the required GPA for the midterm of 1997 (Admissions Office, 1997).

To further enhance the academic achievement of students, a dedicated academic magnet high school implemented a study skills program, “Dynamics of Effective Study.” African American freshmen can voluntarily enroll in the course. Entwistle (1960) contends that voluntary enrollment in a study skills course can enhance the academic achievement of the participant.

An examination of the effects of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on the academic achievement of African American freshmen at a dedicated academic magnet high school was conducted in an attempt to add to the research on the academic achievement of African American high school students.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter identifies the variables, sampling procedures, study design, data collection, reliability, analysis procedures, and limitations of this study.

The study was designed to examine the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators of the effectiveness of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study” on the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school in southeast Louisiana. Further examination was conducted to explore why differences in perceptions existed.

Research Questions

The following are the questions used in this study:

1. What influenced African American students to take the study skills course?

2. What specific strategies did African American students learn from the study skills course?

3. How has the study skills course affected the students’ academic achievement?

4. What factors have been obstacles to students’ success?

5. What factors have contributed to students’ success?

6. What study skills are used by students?
   a) How do students prepare for quizzes and tests?
   b) What do students do in classes in which the teacher lectures?
   c) What processes do students use in learning new information?
   d) What are the students’ weekly activities for preparing for school, including the
weekend?
e) What processes do students use for studying including the amount of time they spend studying weekly?
f) What do students do when they are introduced to unfamiliar concepts?
g) How do students display information that has lots of information or is difficult to understand with words?
h) What do students do to develop critical thinking skills?
i) What do students do to comprehend information?
j) How do students prepare for reports and writing assignments?

7. Was the study skills course effective?

Qualitative research requires an extensive amount of fieldwork with emphasis on accuracy, validity, and integrity of findings. To ensure the credibility of qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced four criteria to determine trustworthiness. Those criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). They were used to demonstrate the truth value of the qualitative research of this study.

Population and Sample

For the qualitative study, a stratified purposeful sample was used to select students (Patton, 2002). There were three strata:

(1) Class (sophomore, senior);
(2) Gender (male, female);
(3) GPA (between 2.5 – 3.0, above 3.0)

Fifteen African American students who completed the study skills course and fifteen
African American students who did not take or complete the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” were matched by entrance reading stanine scores from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and entrance GPAs. Of the fifteen African American student participants, nine students were sophomores and six students were seniors. The sophomore student participants consisted of one male and eight females. The senior student participants consisted of one male and five females. The entrance reading stanine score from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and entrance GPA of each student were collected to provide academic information about each participant. One female sophomore had a GPA between 2.5 and 3.0. Seven female sophomores and one male sophomore had GPAs above 3.0. Three female seniors and one male senior had GPAs between 2.5 and 3.0. Two female seniors had GPAs above 3.0. There were no male seniors with GPAs above 3.0. See Appendix F for student participants’ characteristics.

The student non-participants of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” consisted of nine African American sophomores and six African American seniors. The sophomore student participants consisted of one male and eight females. The senior student participants consisted of one male and five females. The entrance reading stanine score from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and entrance GPA of each student were collected to provide academic information about each student non-participant in the study skills course. One female sophomore had a GPA between 2.5 and 3.0. Seven female sophomores and one male sophomore had GPAs above 3.0. Three female seniors and one male senior had GPAs between 2.5 and 3.0. Two female seniors
had GPAs above 3.0. There were no male seniors with GPAs above 3.0. See Appendix G for students’ characteristics.

Snowball or chain sampling was used to select the five former study skills teachers, and three administrators. Students and faculty members at the school recommended them. The ethnic backgrounds of the five former study skills teachers interviewed were: three Caucasian females and two African American females. The teachers had been in the educational profession for two, eight, seventeen, twenty-seven and twenty-eight years. A summary of their characteristics is exhibited in Appendix H.

Two of the administrators were Caucasian and one administrator was African American. All of the administrators were female. One of the administrators had been in the educational profession for thirty-four years with thirteen years of experience as an administrator. Another administrator had been in the educational profession for twenty-three years with six years of experience as an administrator. The third administrator had been in the educational profession for nineteen years, serving eight years as an administrator. See Appendix I for the administrators’ characteristics.

Data Sources/Instrument/Measures

The interview questions were developed from the study skills course curriculum guide. The questions, which were pilot tested, allowed students, teachers, and administrators to provide rich and relevant information about their experiences at a dedicated academic magnet high school.

The main instrument of the investigation was the investigator who used a tape recorder and fieldnotes.

An interview guide (Patton, 1990) was used for this study so that the student
participants were asked the same questions. By utilizing the guide, uniform information was obtained during the interviews. Separate questionnaires were developed for the students and the teachers/administrators. The students who completed the study skills course and students who did not take or complete the study skills course were asked the same questions from the student questionnaire. The teachers and administrators were asked the same questions from the teachers/administrators questionnaire.

The questions allowed the students to express their views about the study skills course, study skills learned and used, obstacles to their success, factors that contributed to their success, and perceptions of effectiveness of the study skills course. The teachers were able to give information about their educational experiences, views about the study skills course, perceived obstacles to students’ success, perceived obstacles to factors that contribute to students’ success, and perceptions of effectiveness of the study skills course.

Data Analysis

Constant comparative methods by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) were used to analyze the interviews of the students, teachers, and administrators. The Constant Comparative Method unitizes and categorizes information into emergent themes. This analysis involved (1) unitizing the data by breaking down the data into the smallest units of information; (2) categorizing the units by recording the data individually on cards; (3) negotiating categories by sorting the data after it was divided into units; and (4) identifying themes by looking for recurring regularities. Using categories are a good method for a researcher to begin data analyses because similarities and differences between cases can be identified (Patton, 1990). Contrast and componential analyses (Spradley, 1979) were performed to distinguish the experiences of each participant as a
(1) student, (2) study skills teacher, and (3) administrator.

Domain analysis identified emerging themes. A summary sheet was prepared for each participant. The collected data of the interviews of the students, teachers, and administrators were compiled for accessibility. The audiotape of each interview was transcribed. It provided pertinent data for the study. The analyses of the interview data provided an overview of the students’, teachers’, and administrators’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study.”

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced four criteria to determine trustworthiness to ensure the credibility of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria were used to demonstrate the truth value of the qualitative research of this study.

Credibility

Credibility in research is determined by the rigorous standards used in collecting and analyzing data. Standards were set and followed to assure credibility of the fieldwork. Triangulation (Patton, 1990) and member checks were used to give credibility to this study. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple data-collection methods, data sources, and analysts to validate the qualitative research findings (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996). Data were collected from open-ended questions that were asked to African American students who completed the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” African American students who did not take or complete the study skills course, five former study skills teachers, and three administrators at a dedicated academic magnet high school. The
students who completed the study skills course were matched with the students who did not complete the study skills course.

Member checks were used to examine the collected data. The collected data was analyzed utilizing analytical categories, interpretations, and conclusions. The results of the interviews were shared with interviewees to determine the accuracy of the interpretations.

**Transferability**

Transferability refers to whether the findings from a study can be used in another context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thick descriptions of interpretations and conclusions from the sending context to the receiving context include detailed description of all information of the study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). The conclusions are thorough and clearly presented for future interpretations (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This study included verbatim interview quotes, and thick descriptions of the setting, findings, and conclusions.

**Dependability**

The researcher must remain aware that possible changes can occur over time in reporting results (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To assure dependability of the study, the collection and dissemination of the findings were carefully designed. An audit may examine the process and findings of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The audit will include (1) consent forms and relevant public documents, (2) unedited interview tapes, (3) process notes, (4) fieldnotes, (5) debriefing notes, (6) transcriptions, and (7) peer comments.
Confirmability

The findings and interpretations of the collected data must be internally coherent (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The researcher should be fair, balanced, and conscientious in documenting multiple perspectives, multiple realities, and multiple interests (Guba, 1978). In this study an outline of the researcher’s experiences and perspective as an investigator was provided. A well-constructed process for analyzing the data reinforced the neutrality of the results.

The Researcher

I worked at this school from the fall of 1992 through the spring of 1998. I was a mathematics teacher from 1992-95. I taught algebra I, algebra II, and integrated algebra/geometry. I then became director of admissions from 1995-1998. As director of admissions, I recruited and enrolled students at the school. I was regulated by a court order to enroll an equal number of African American students and non-African American students for the school. Through the enrollment process, I became aware of the high attrition rate of African American students. Under the leadership of the administration, the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” was one of several programs implemented in the curriculum to enhance the academic achievement of incoming freshmen. I chose to study the effectiveness of the study skills course to determine whether it might enhance the academic achievement and retention rate of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school, based on the perceptions of its effectiveness by students, teachers, and administrators.
Data Collection

The data was collected in three phases:

1. Phase one consisted of obtaining permission from the district superintendent to conduct the study. After receiving permission from the parish school system, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the principal of the dedicated academic magnet high school. The researcher then identified the population for the multiple case study. Permission forms were given to the student participants and collected from them. Two student participants attended two other high schools and permission was obtained from their principals to conduct the study. Data were collected from students’ transcripts.

2. Phase two consisted of in-depth, open-ended interviews of students, teachers, and administrators. Most of the interviews were conducted at the dedicated academic magnet high school. Two of the student interviews were conducted at two other high schools in the parish where the students attended at the time of data collection. Another student interview was conducted at the student’s home due to absenteeism during data collection. The open-ended teacher and administrator interviews were conducted at the dedicated academic magnet high school. All of the interviews were conducted with each individual face-to-face. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim.

3. Phase three consisted of reviewing the transcripts with each participant. Meeting with the student participants, conversing by telephone, and communicating through the mail and e-mails further clarified responses. Interview data collection took a total of three months.
Context of the Study

The dedicated academic magnet high school in this study has been under a court order since 1976 to enroll a 50% African American and 50% non-African American student population. The regulated enrollment for African American student and non-African American student populations has not been attained since the development of the magnet school program. (See Table 3.1 for student enrollment). There are two reasons why this has not occurred. One is that not enough African American students have applied and met the school admission criteria. The other reason that the attendance rate for African American students has not reached 50% of the student population is that many of the African American freshmen who met the admission criteria do not maintain the minimum 2.5 GPA to remain at the school (Admissions Records, 1997). It is interesting to note that in the most recent years, the proportion of African American students in the school has come close to meeting the 50% target.

To retain students at the school, study skills had been offered to enhance the academic achievement of all students, including African American students. Study skills had been integrated in the curriculum since 1976 (Admissions Office, 2002). However, it became a separate course taught to freshmen in 1993 (Guidance Records, 1993). The course continues to be offered to students as long as enough students enroll in the class. The objective of the study skills course was to enhance the academic achievement of students. It was an elective course.

This dedicated academic magnet high school was founded in 1976. It specializes in academics and the visual and performing arts. The school is located in an urban city near the business district. Sitting back about four hundred feet from a main street, the campus
is adorned with oak, spruce, and magnolia trees. Benches are aligned on campus for
students and teachers to use for conversing and studying. The campus encompasses a full
block. There are six separate buildings on campus and two parking lots. At the back of
the campus are the tennis courts, soccer field, track, and baseball fields. Students are
bused to the YMCA to attend swimming classes. Golf is also offered at the school.
Students are bused to a local golf course for this activity.

The school offers a diverse set of core, honors, and advanced placement courses. As a
college preparatory school, it offers fifteen courses in English, nineteen courses in
speech/drama/radio/television, sixteen courses in social studies, eighteen courses in
mathematics, sixteen courses in science, thirty-one courses in foreign language, three
courses in business education, six courses in vocal music and thirty-one courses in
physical education.

During the 1982-83 school year the National Commission on Excellence in Education
cited this school for academic excellence under President Reagan’s Excellence in
Education Program. It was one of four secondary schools in the state chosen for this
prestigious honor and was rated as one of the top one hundred forty-four schools in the
nation, and is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

There are approximately forty clubs that students can join (Dean of Students Office,
2002). There are clubs for academic enhancement, leisure activities, religious
affiliations, and service. All of the clubs are co-ed. Academic clubs have requirements
of minimum grade point average and grade status criteria as set forth by the clubs.

To become a student at this dedicated academic magnet high school, a student must
file an application with the school and meet the admissions requirements. Admission
Table 3.1

African American and Non-African American Enrollment at a Dedicated Academic Magnet High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>%African American</th>
<th>%Non-African American</th>
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<td>24</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
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<td>82</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
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<td>1995-96</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Magnet Office, October 1, 2002.

standards require parental consent, a minimum of a 2.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale for the last five semesters of school, a minimum reading stanine score of five in reading from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and residence in the attendance zone in the parish. However, for the 1996-97 school year only 255 of 1132 African American
students from the public feeder schools were qualified to enroll. The residence boundaries were therefore changed to include African American students throughout the parish. When all African American students in the parish were included in the eligibility pool, the number of qualified students increased to 330 students for the 1997-98 school year.

A student can remain at this dedicated academic magnet high school if the following requirements are satisfied: A minimum 2.5 grade point average for the school year, a 95% yearly attendance record, and conformity to the school board discipline policy.

For the first twenty-one years of the formation of the magnet program, the school had a disproportionately large non-African American student enrollment compared to the African American student population. In 1976 the non-African American student population was 76% compared to the African American population of 24%. The population varied throughout the years. In 1997 the non-African American population was 63% compared to the 37% African American student population. The enrollment of African American students has increased significantly since 1998. Presently, this dedicated academic magnet high school has a 47% African American student population and a 53% non-African American student population.

Limitations

Conclusions about the impact of this study are limited to similar students and schools with a study skills course for African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school. This dedicated academic magnet high school is located in an urban area in southeast Louisiana. The total student population of the school is approximately 1100. The school is a visual and performing arts and a dedicated academic magnet high school.
The study is limited by the fact that students volunteer to enroll in the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study.” The course is not a required course for graduation. It is an elective course. This fact may indicate the motivation level of the student participants to achieve in school.

Causal-comparative research is limited in establishing causality on the basis of the collected data (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). In this study, it is impossible to control (1) students who drop out (e.g. those who transfer to another high school or those who get their GEDs), and (2) the influence of peers, parents, teachers, administrators, staff, and the community about the African American enrollment at a dedicated academic magnet high school.

Summary

The research questions in this study were addressed by qualitative methods. The qualitative methods consisted of in-depth, open-ended interviews with students, former study skills teachers, and administrators. Constant comparative methods by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) were used to analyze the interviews for this study. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) were used to demonstrate the truth-value of the qualitative research of this study. Contrast and componential analyses (Spradley, 1979) were performed to distinguish the experiences of each participant as a (1) student, (2) study skills teacher, and (3) administrator.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the students, teachers, and administrators of the effectiveness of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on the academic achievement of African American students.

This chapter focuses on the findings from the qualitative analyses of the interview responses. Information rich data was collected from fifteen African American students who completed the study skills course, fifteen African American students who did not take or complete the study skills course, five former study skills teachers, and three administrators. Data were collected from fieldnotes, open-ended interviews, e-mails, and mail outs. Seven sub-level research questions were asked to student participants, student non-participants, teachers, and administrators:

1. What influenced African American students to take the study skills course?
2. What specific strategies did African American students learn from the study skills course?
3. How has the study skills course affected the students’ academic achievement?
4. What factors have been obstacles to students’ success?
5. What factors have contributed to students’ success?
6. What study skills are used by students?
   a) How do students prepare for quizzes and tests?
   b) What do students do in classes in which the teacher lectures?
   c) What processes do students use in learning new information?
d) What are the students’ weekly activities for preparing for school, including the weekend?

e) What processes do students use for studying, including the amount of time they spend studying weekly?

f) What do students do when they are introduced to unfamiliar concepts?

g) How do students display information that has lots of information or is difficult to understand with words?

h) What do students do to develop critical thinking skills?

i) What do students do to comprehend information?

j) How do students prepare for reports and writing assignments?

7. Was the study skills course effective?

**Descriptive Data**

In this study, students who completed the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” are called student participants. Students who did not take or complete the study skills course are called student non-participants. Information about the student participants, student non-participants, former teachers of the study skills course, and the administrators from the dedicated academic magnet high school can be found in Appendix J. Student responses were written as SP for student participants, NP for student non-participants, T for teachers, A for administrators, and I for the interviewer. Numbers were assigned to the interviewees. The student participants and student non-participants were assigned numbers 1-15. The teachers were assigned numbers 1-5 and the administrators were assigned numbers 1-3.
Categorical Analysis

Two qualitative data analysis orientations were utilized in this study: Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) unitizing and categorizing processes and the contrast principle from Spradley’s (1979) Developmental Research Sequence. Below is an example of how these data analysis orientations were utilized:

When student participant 9 was asked, “What influenced you to take the study skills course?” she responded as follows: “I didn’t sign up for it. My mom signed me up because I came at the end of the semester and I needed a semester course.” The data was broken down into individual data elements utilizing the unitizing process:

I didn’t sign up for it. My mom signed me up// because I came at the end of the semester and I needed a semester course.//

The data was assigned into provisional categorical names utilizing the categorizing process.

I didn’t sign up for it. My mom signed me up// Recommendations
because I came at the end of the semester I needed Elective
a semester course.//

These provisional categories were converted into a final set of categories. The responses from the student participants, student non-participants, teachers, and administrators were compared using Spradley’s (1979) contrast principle. A sample contrast analysis would be like the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme 1: Recommendations</th>
<th>Theme 2: Elective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student participants</td>
<td># of students</td>
<td># of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student non-participants</td>
<td># of students</td>
<td># of students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 1: What influenced African American students to take the study skills course?

Student participants’, teachers’, and administrators’ responses were analyzed as follows:

Student Participants

The student participant responses were categorized into five themes: need study skills, recommendations, elective, self, and required.

Need Study Skills: The most frequently mentioned factor, indicated by the eight of the fifteen student participants, was a need to learn study skills. They wanted to learn how to study, improve study habits, or effectively take tests. Four student participants indicated that they needed to learn how to study. The student participants stated:

SP2: [I’m taking the study skills course] to help me study, because I don’t study very good.

SP5: Because I really don’t like to study and I figured if I took the course, it would make me learn how to study more, so I could remember stuff in less time, so I wouldn’t have to study as long.

I: OK, did it do that for you?

SP5: Yes, ma’am.

SP10: Well, I’m bad [at] studying. Like I don’t study very well. So I thought I needed [to take that class.]

SP15: I felt that I needed to learn how to study more, that my study skills were not up to par.

One student participant wanted to improve her study skills.

SP6: I promised that I’d study better.

Three student participants wanted to learn effective test taking strategies, and one of those student participants particularly wanted to reduce test anxiety. As stated by student participants:

SP1: [I took the study skills course] just to learn about different strategies you can
learn for a test.

SP7: Well, I took it because I’m not really a good test taker and I wanted to learn better ways for me to take tests because I’m really not real good at test taking.

SP14: [Well, I took this course] for reducing anxiety for tests. Because just like [the] LEAP test, like [the] ACT test, [they] make me really, really nervous because they have really high stakes.

Recommendations: Six student participants indicated that they were influenced to take the study skills course from recommendations of parents or the guidance counselor.

The student participants’ responses were:

SP1: Well, my parents thought it would be good to take the elective.

SP8: I didn’t sign up for it. They gave it to me because I had health for first semester and I needed a class for second semester, so I was given study skills.
I: Okay, and who’s they?
SP8: [The] guidance office … just put it on my schedule.

Four out of six student participants indicated that they took the course because they were heavily influenced by their mothers to take the course. The student participants stated:

SP4: Really my mom wanted me to take it.

SP6: My mom [influenced me to take the study skills course].

SP9: I didn’t sign up for it. My mom signed me up because I came at the [end of the first] semester and I needed a semester course.

SP12: My mom told me, so.

Elective: Five out of fifteen student participants indicated that they took the course because it was an elective they needed to fulfill their course requirements. As stated by student participants:

SP1: Well, my parents thought that it would be good to take the elective.

SP3: I took health first semester and that was like one of the only courses available at that period. That was half a semester.
SP8: I needed a class for second semester, so I was given study skills.

SP9: I needed a semester course.

SP13: It was an elective and you had to take it.

Self: Two student participants reported that they chose to take the study skills course. Their responses were:

SP5: I figured if I took the course, it would make me learn how to study more.

SP15: I really influenced myself to take the study skills course because before I took it, I never use to study and I didn’t understand how to study. But after I learned all of the different techniques like note-taking and listening in class and everything, that helped me now. That’s where I am now.

Required: The one student participant who took the course because it was required stated:

SP11: Well, all high school students are required to take the study skills, “Dynamics.” So at first I was at [another high school] before I transferred to [the dedicated academic magnet high school]. Then when I came there they told me it would be best to just go on and stay in that course and I stayed.

Teachers

The teachers were specifically asked: Why do you think African American students enrolled in the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study?” Their responses were categorized into three themes: recommendations, elective, and need study skills.

Recommendations: The most frequently reported response from the teachers as to their perceptions of why African American students enrolled in the study skills course was that students were influenced by their parents, the admissions officer, or the guidance counselor. Three teachers indicated:

T1: I do believe that most of them are in here because their parents or their counselor feel that they would benefit from a course that gives them guidance on how to do well in school.
T2: One of the reasons they enrolled the year I taught it was because the admissions officer looked very carefully at their test scores and decided they would benefit from a structured study skills program.

T3: A lot of them didn’t select it. Their parents told them to [take the study skills course]. These are freshmen. It was only offered to freshmen and a lot of them said that their parents encouraged them. A lot of them had great grades coming into the class and their parents just wanted them to stay on task because they were going into a huge adjustment and that high school would be a lot more rigorous than other schools or their past school. And so they just wanted them to get that foundation down.


Elective: Two of the five teachers stated that students took the course because it was an elective and students needed a course to satisfy their course requirements.

T1: [African American students enrolled in the study skills course] because they needed an elective.

T5: [The study skills course is] something … [students] take to fill that spot.

Need Study Skills: Two of the five teachers stated that students took the course because they needed study skills to meet the challenges of this dedicated academic magnet high school.

T2: A structured study skills program [would] help them stay organized and also teach them different study strategies.

T4: [African American students enrolled in the study skills course] so that they could be successful at [the dedicated academic magnet high school.]

I: What do you mean successful?

T4: So that they can earn the 2.5 [GPA] knowing the risk because they’re told the very first day the dangers of what happens to most of a third of the freshman. They end up leaving and it’s just because of their study skills. And so they try to prevent that.

Administrators

The administrators were specifically asked: Why do you think African American students enrolled in the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study?” Their responses were categorized into three themes: need study skills, recommendations, and
Need Study Skills: All three administrators interviewed stated that students enrolled in the study skills course because they needed study skills.

A1: Well, when the course was first developed, we saw where the kids really needed some help in managing their time and learning how to study, and how to divide the time for different courses, etc.

A2: During registration, we always recommend those students that [we] feel like they don’t have a good study base. [These students] don’t know how to study, take notes and so on and so forth. That’s one of the options that we give to them.

A3: [For] a lot of African American students who are not affluent and need extra help, [the study skills course] might be the only place they get the extra help. Unfortunately we do have for some reason a lot of our African American kids [who] have problems in math. They don’t have the foundation. Somehow, somewhere in an inner city school wherever they grew up, they did not for whatever reason get those foundation skills. They’re weak in math. A lot of times that’s why [we] want to put them in that “Dynamics” class to [give them] …that extra help they need and [to provide] foundation skills.”

Recommendations: One administrator indicated that the students’ parents influenced their children to take the study skills course.

A2: Lots of times it’s a parental choice [for students to take the study skills course] because they assume that it’s study skills. They … want to make sure [their children will succeed]. So they’ll … go ahead and sign the child up for that.

Elective: Administrator 2 also stated that students took the course because it was an elective that students needed to fulfill their course requirements.

A2: [The study skills course] is considered an elective. We [basically have] a track of music electives, theatre electives, art electives and if you don’t really fit into one of those categories, [the study skills course is] another elective that [freshmen] can have. They can take [study skills and] pair it up with health and get their health out of the way.

See Table 4.1 for student participants’ frequency count of influences to enroll in the study skills course.
Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Elective</th>
<th>Theme #2 Recommendations</th>
<th>Theme #3 Need Study Skills</th>
<th>Theme #4 Required</th>
<th>Theme #5 Self</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Participants</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2: What specific strategies did African American students learn from the study skills course?

Student participants’, teachers’, and administrators’ responses were analyzed as follows:

**Student Participants**

The student participants’ responses were categorized into eight themes: note-taking skills, reading skills, studying, test taking skills, outlining skills, time management skills, listening skills, and none.

Note-taking Skills: Seven student participants indicated that they particularly learned note-taking skills. Note-taking skills included outlining, recognition of root words, implementation of the PQ5R textbook note-taking method for studying, reading, and reviewing, and writing margin notes. The student participants stated:

SP5: [In note-taking I learned how] to spell better and [use correct] grammar.

SP7: I learned [to] take better notes so that when we do have tests, I have like everything and that helps me really well with the different questions, like true-false. It’s easy for me to do those because I know what to look for, certain words.

SP8: All I remember is the PQ5R system, which was for homework skills.

I: And where do you use that strategy?
SP8: I just used it in that class. I didn’t really use it to study.
SP11: I’ve learned how to write more efficiently.
SP12: [I learned how to write] margin notes, [and highlight].

SP13: [I learned how to write] margin notes.

SP15: I’ve learned that it varies for different people. Most people just take notes, like just write notes down or either most people paraphrase words or most people don’t have to take notes. They just have a good understanding. But for me I rather take notes with a bullet. It helps me understand better or either paraphrasing it so it won’t take so much time. So I won’t have to write all the words out and left behind what the teacher said. And never take notes from a friend because you never know what they know you might not know so you should never take notes from a friend. Take your own notes. I learned that you have to take good notes. You just have to really understand what the teacher is saying.

In reply to note-taking strategies for social studies, SP15 stated:

SP15: Social studies is not that easy to learn but if you take good notes, … you’ll understand it.

Reading Skills: Reading skills were reported as the next prevalent study skill learned by the student participants. Even though it is not listed as an objective of the study skills course, reading was reported as a skill learned by six of the fifteen student participants. Student participants indicated that they read when they reviewed notes, prepared for tests, and completed assignments. Six student participants stated:

SP2: [I learned] about reading over the material and picking out some questions, so I could get the answers.

SP4: Reading out loud … helped me.

SP6: [I] just keep reading every day for an hour.

SP11: I learned how to take time out and read over questions that are on the test, like standardized tests and not spending a whole lot of time on them.

SP12: [I] read, statements … essays.
SP14: [I learned how to] skim the text one time. You read to catch on the main ideas and that tells me a lot when I try to understand something.

Studying: Four out of fifteen student participants reported that they learned study techniques from the study skills course. Their responses were:
SP5: [I learned] ways to study basically, to make it easier on yourself.
I: Can you tell specifically some ways you’ve learned to make it easier for you to study?
SP5: Like I said earlier, the key words that we pick out of sentences to remember [helped me in studying.]

SP10: I learned how to remember things and to study ahead of time instead of waiting until the last minute like I did before the class.

SP12: [I learned how] to take [my] time studying.

SP13: [I learned] studying [methods] [I studied my] papers and [began] using different things to remember stuff.

The student participants indicated from the interviews that they learned test taking skills, outlining skills, time management skills, and listening skills.

Test Taking Skills: Three student participants indicated that they learned test taking skills.

SP1: [I learned] how to do true and false, to look at what makes the statement false and how to eliminate some answers from multiple choice.

SP11: I learned how to take time out and read over questions that are on the test, like standardized tests and not spending a whole lot of time on them.

SP15: Always try to be calm before a test because if you get nervous then …[you ] will have a bad result. When studying for a math test, you should look at the problem and try the problem at least three or four times so that you can really understand the problem. And that will help you better on the test because once you take the test you’ll remember the problem that you studied the night before and you can go through the process on the test so it won’t take up so much time.”

Outlining Skills: Two student participants indicated that they learned outlining skills. They stated:

SP4: Outlin[ing] helped me [study key ideas].

SP12: [I learned how] to outline things.

Time Management Skills: Two out of fifteen student participants indicated that they learned time management skills.
SP3: I learned how to manage my time and not spend too much time doing certain things.

SP10: [I learned] how to pace myself.

Listening Skills: One student stated that listening was an important study skill.

SP15: Listening is way better than trying to understand how you write your own notes.

None: One student participant indicated that she didn’t learn any study skills from the course.

SP9: There is nothing that I can really pinpoint [about what I learned in the study skills course.]

Table 4.2 contains the frequency counts of the study skills strategies used by African American student participants who completed the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study.”

**Table 4.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Note-taking Skills</th>
<th>Theme #2 Time Management Skills</th>
<th>Theme #3 Test Taking Skills</th>
<th>Theme #4 Listening Skills</th>
<th>Theme #5 Studying</th>
<th>Theme #6 Outlining Skills</th>
<th>Theme #7 Reading Skills</th>
<th>Theme #8 None</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Participants</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 3: How has the study skills course affected the students’ academic achievement?

Student participants’, teachers’, and administrators’ responses were analyzed as follows:

**Student Participants**

The responses of the student participants were categorized into six themes: improved GPA, learned how to study, learned time management skills, learned note-taking skills,
learned test taking skills, and none. See table 4.3 for the frequency counts of effects of study skills on students’ academic achievement.

Improved GPA: The student participants indicated in 10 out of the 27 responses that their GPAs improved. Their responses were:

SP1: [The study skills course] has helped increase my GPA.

SP2: [The study skills course] helped me a lot. I’m starting to get better grades.

I: Did your grades improve?
SP3: Yeah.

SP5: [The study skills course] made my grades go up and that’s good.

SP6: Well [the study skills course] helped me pull up my grades.

SP10: [The study skills course] helped [my academic achievement] because if I wouldn’t have taken that class last year I probably would have had worse grades than I did.

SP11: [My grades] got better. [The study skills course] helped me and it just made my academic achievement level get higher. As I use [study skills] day by day [my grades] get better.

I: Did your GPA get improve after taking the study skills course?
SP12: Yeah.

I: Do you think your grades are better because you’ve taken [the study skills course]?
SP13: Yes, ma’am.

SP14: [My grades are] better.

Learned How to Study: Nine out of fifteen student participants indicated that they learned how to study. Their responses were:

SP1: I learned to study [in] quiet places in the house.

SP2: [The study skills course] helped me study better. I’m choosing the right places to study, like studying in the bedroom, studying at a desk and having everything right by me so I don’t have to get up and interrupt myself.

SP3: [The study skills course] helped because I’ve learned a lot of techniques. Like as
far as I was saying, like linking stuff together. That’s helped me. [I’m learning] stuff that I would’ve never thought about doing.

SP4: Well when I was using [study skills] I was doing good, but I’m not really disciplined. You know what I mean? Sometimes it worked out. Well, I’m doing better now because I’m starting to realize that I need to use … [study skills]. So I’m kind of doing better.

SP6: Well [the study skills course] helped me to study better.

SP7: I do way better than I used to. I know how to study a little better.

SP13: If I hadn’t taken study skills, I would probably just be reading the chapter and thinking that I would understand everything.

SP14: [The study skills course] taught me [how] to study more efficiently.

SP15: [The study skills course] has affected me real good because before I was like totally stuck on stuff. I didn’t know how to study. Study skills [were] … Greek. I didn’t understand anything but now I understand. I have a better understanding of how to study and how to learn, [and how to] comprehend stuff better.

Learned Time Management: Two out of fifteen student participants indicated that they learned time management skills. Their responses were:

SP1: I learned to not wait until the night before [to prepare for tests].

SP10: [The study skills course] helped when I took it last year. I probably wouldn’t have known [how] to manage my time. For each class I know what to do.

Learned Outlining Skills: Two out of fifteen student participants indicated that they used outlines learned from the study skills course:

SP1: I use outlining to prepare my essay.

SP13: [Outlining] is one way that I get to look at the whole chapter.

Learned Test Taking Strategies: Two student participants indicated that they learned test taking skills from the study skills course. Their responses were:

SP1: I know how to recognize a test taking strategy to help me with the test.

Student participant 7 indicated that the study skills course improved her test taking
skills. She reported:

SP7: [The study skills course] helped me a lot because even though I’m not uneducated in the skills of taking tests, I do way better than I use to. When I’m taking tests it just seems easier for me.

None: Two student participants stated that they didn’t learn anything from the course. Their responses were as follows:

SP8: Well, before I took the course my grades were good and after they fell a little bit. I pulled them back up so I don’t think the study skills course had anything to do with my grades. It was just me, I guess. So I didn’t really learn anything too much from the class.

SP9: I don’t know if it has [affected my academic achievement]. I don’t know if it has for sure.

For research question 3, the teachers and administrators were specifically asked:

How did the study skills course affect the academic achievement of African American students?

Teachers

The teachers’ responses were categorized into two themes: GPA improved and met GPA criterion. Three of the five teachers reported that students’ GPAs improved after taking the study skills course. One teacher stated that five of twelve students she taught in the class “graduated in the top 10% of their class.” The remaining two teachers reported that students met the GPA criterion and were still enrolled at the school.

GPA Improved: The teachers stated:

T1: I remember that year I only had a small class. I only had about twelve in that class and I can remember five of those students. I can remember five of them that graduated from [the dedicated academic magnet high school]. That’s not to say that the others didn’t but I can remember five of them graduated in the top 10% of their class.

T2: For a percentage of them and I would love to say it was a majority, when they bought into the program they did better.
T3: As far as how they did at [the dedicated academic magnet high school] I don’t teach all of them but out of the first group that I taught in 99, I have three of them this year [as] seniors and all three are A/B students.
I: Do you feel that course helped them?
T3: It did help them.

Met GPA Criterion: The teachers stated:

T4: Of my students who were in my study skills they’re all still here. So, I think that’s good.
I: So do you think from their participation in the course it helped them attain and maintain the 2.5 GPA?
T4: I’d like to think that. It’s just that these were students who were supposed to want to work to stay here. They still showed that inclination of wanting to stay at that point and so they still continued to work on through.

T5: I would like to say that I helped. I will put it to you this way. All of my African American students that were in the course are still here [in] their sophomore year.

Administrators

The administrators were specifically asked: How did the study skills course affect the academic achievement of African American students? Their responses were categorized into two themes: don’t know and met GPA criterion.

Don’t Know: Two of the administrators indicated that they didn’t know the effects of the study skills course on the academic achievement of African American students who completed the course. They could not validate GPA improvement solely from the effects of the study skills course. Their responses were as follows:

A1: Hopefully for some it helped. But as I stated we finally stopped using that course because it was not doing it what we wanted it to be. And the students were not taking it for what it should have been. They took it as a remedial course. And as a result they had a negative attitude about it.

A2: I don’t have the statistics on that. I don’t know.

Met GPA criterion: One administered responded as follows:

A3: You know you have kids who really have a desire to be at [this dedicated academic magnet high school.] It’s more than just going to school here. It’s something that
their parents have never dreamed. It’s just like what every parent feels when a child goes to college. When a child is accepted at [this dedicated academic magnet high school] at that moment you feel like your child has made it. And so what I’m trying to tell you is … [it helped]. Some kids really wanted to stay here who really felt like that this was the most important thing was to stay at [this dedicated academic magnet high school] because everyone else would come if they could just graduate from here. And so the “Dynamics” course would help those students who really wanted the help.

Table 4.3

Frequency Count of Effects of Study Skills on Students’ Academic Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Learned Time Management</th>
<th>Theme #2 Learned Outlining Skills</th>
<th>Theme #3 Learned How to Study</th>
<th>Theme #4 Learned Test Taking Strategies</th>
<th>Theme #5 Improved GPA</th>
<th>Theme #6 None</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Participants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second part of the study consisted of a comparative study of students who completed the study skills course and similar students who did not take or complete the study skills course. Research questions 4 – 8 addressed these issues. Student participants, student non-participants, teachers, and administrators were asked research questions 4-8.

Research Question 4: What factors have been obstacles to students’ success? Student Participants

The student participants’ responses were categorized into six themes: time management, workload, distractions, lack of comprehension skills, lack of note-taking skills, and lack of listening skills.

Time Management: The most prevalent response from the student participants was time management. The student participants responses were as follows:

SP3: Coming from track and then having to go home and do homework …[was] an obstacle.
SP5: I’d say the timing of the classes [was an obstacle]. Sometimes … [I] get sleepy … when … [I] sit there and listen to someone lecture for an hour and a half.

SP7: Sometimes I slack and don’t study for the next [class] because I get tired and don’t feel like studying anymore. So that’s a major obstacle for me.

SP8: [An obstacle is] not being able to manage my time wisely. [I have] poor management skills.

SP9: I procrastinate a lot. I know I have this work to do and I wait until the last minute to do it.

SP10: Being late with my work, …not taking enough time to study for tests, [not preparing for] pop … quizzes, and [not completing] a lot of … bonus work over the holidays [are obstacles for me].

SP15: It’s so hard to keep up with all the work and all the classes.

Workload: Five out of fifteen student participants complained about the school workload. Their responses were as follows:

SP2: [The teacher gives us] … too much [homework].

SP7: If I had a lot of homework or if I have more than one test [then those would be obstacles].

SP8: All the work [are obstacles]. It’ a lot. It’s a lot of work [at this school].

SP12: [One obstacle is] too much homework. I go home every night and I study … for at least 2 or 3 hours.

SP15: It’s a lot of work.

Distractions: Distractions got in the way of five student participants. Distractions were described as follows:

SP4: Immaturity I guess is one of [the obstacles]. I wanted to play a lot, stuff like that. It was stuff like that that kept me from doing all the focusing.

SP7: At my house we have people come over sometimes. The phone is always ringing for somebody. Sometimes it’s my fault because I like to watch TV and I watch a lot of TV at certain times.
SP10: My peers [are obstacles]. Sometimes … I don’t have enough time to go home and study because I have track practice. [I have] other things to do. [These obstacles] affect whether I study.

I: How do your peers obstruct your academic achievement?

SP10: Well sometimes they’re just there … when you’re trying to learn something.

I: Well are your peers here at [the dedicated academic magnet high school]?

SP10: Yes ma’am.

SP13: Sitting next to your friends in class [are distractions].

SP14 had difficulty adjusting as a freshman. His unpopularity with other students occupied his thoughts and interfered with his studies. He stated:

SP14: Well like one of …[the obstacles] was that I was a freshman here. And then like you know how freshman and other classmates look down on you and stuff. I was unpopular with them. So this was for a short while until I got used to it and then I started to ignore them.

Lack of Comprehension Skills: Two students indicated that they had trouble comprehending information. They stated:

SP6: [An obstacle was] not reading over my notes when I get them. If I don’t look at … [them when I get home], then I will never look at … [them].

I: When do you read over your notes?

SP6: When I get home before I go to sleep [is when I read over my notes].

I: Is that daily?

SP6: Yes ma’am

SP14: A challenge now this year is probably taking the GEE since we have to take English and mathematics this March.

Lack of Note-taking Skills: SP1 indicated that she lacked effective note-taking skills.

SP1: [I] didn’t take good notes.

Lack of Listening Skills: SP13 responded as follows:

SP13: [One of my obstacles is] not listening to what the teacher is saying.
The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into six themes: workload, distractions, lack of comprehension skills, lack of test taking skills, lack of note taking skills, and time management.

**Workload:** Six out of fifteen student non-participants agreed with the student participants that the workload was challenging. They reported:

NP1: [One obstacle is that] I have to do a lot of homework.

NP3: [Obstacles] may be the course structure and the teachers. It gets kind of difficult. Just like you only have five classes a day. Because you don’t have homework everyday it’s probably twice as much homework as anybody else would have. The teachers expect a little more out of you. I have honors chemistry and all kinds of other courses and I didn’t do as well as I should have in those courses. I thought it was going to be a breeze but it wasn’t.

NP4: [The] workload [is an obstacle]. The amount of homework that you get [is another obstacle.

NP7: [The workload is] kind of hard.

NP11: Maintaining a 2.5 [is an obstacle] because at my old school. We didn’t have to maintain a certain GPA. I never really tried at my old school so, coming here is really hard to maintain a 2.5.

NP14: The hard work [has been an obstacle].

**Lack of Note-taking Skills:** One student non-participant reported that she had difficulty taking notes.

NP10: I might not get everything that I hear [when the teacher lectures]. I might get some of it and [be] able to go home and fill in the gaps. Sometimes I can just take [the information] straight out of a textbook. I can take the book home and teach myself. I did … that at the beginning of the year.

**Time Management:** Another student reported that time management skills were problematic. She reported:

NP2: Obstacles have been managing my time because we don’t have each class
everyday. Sometimes that can be difficult with … [the amount of] work [that is given].

Distractions: Four out of fifteen student non-participants became distracted when they became involved in social, extracurricular, and family activities. They stated:

NP7: Really trying to have a social life and going here at the same time …[is] kind of hard. You know can’t really go to a lot of places on the weekend and stuff like you use to but it’s OK. It turns out better at the end.

NP12: Running track is [an obstacle] because it takes a lot of your time. You miss a lot of school too because obviously we’re out of town a lot. You get out of class. Some teachers don’t let you make up your work. You miss a lot of school and you miss a lot of work. You miss a lot of work for the tests.

NP13: Track after school [is a distraction]. I wouldn’t have time to do my homework sometimes.

NP15: [I] want to go [to different] places and sometimes [that] affects the way that I study at night.

Lack of Comprehension Skills: Three out of fifteen student non-participants reported that they lacked comprehension skills. These students had trouble adjusting to certain teaching styles, succeeding in mathematics, and implementing correct writing skills.

NP5: The different styles of teaching [have been obstacles] and you have to get use to that. Some teachers expect one thing and another teacher expects another. You have to get use to all the different teaching [styles].

NP6: I’m not really good in math so I have to work really, really hard. That’s been an obstacle. I have to take tutoring for math.

NP8: Obstacles … this year …[would] definitely be writing. I enjoy reading. I enjoy literature and I enjoy discussing it. But I’m not the best writer. I don’t enjoy composing [and writing] essays or papers. So that was a huge obstacle.

Lack of Test Taking Skills: Two student non-participants stated that they needed effective test taking skills.

NP12: You can fail the test if you don’t get the work.
NP14: All the studying for tests and quizzes [are hard].

See Table 4.4 for the frequency count of the factors that were obstacles to the students’ success.

Teachers

Teachers were specifically asked: What factors do you feel have been obstacles to the academic achievement of African American students at this dedicated academic magnet high school? Their responses were categorized into four themes: lack of support, not motivated, distractions, and nothing.

Lack of Support: Two out of five teachers indicated that non-support of the students’ interests and culture were obstacles to the success of African American students. They reported:

T1: I do think a lack of sports [is an obstacle]. Students choose to go elsewhere even though they could flourish academically here. Another obstacle is that idea that being a good student is somehow not consistent with being “cool”, “with it”, “down”, or whatever the term is today. A lack of cultural understanding can also cause a teacher to dismiss a student as “worthless”, or “incorrigible” because he or she misunderstands the student’s motivations. Some students don’t fulfill their potential because they hesitate to take honors and advance placement classes. This reluctance is due primarily to a lack of confidence and the fact [that] there are not enough students who look like them in these classes.

T2: Sometimes a break down in communication between the school and the homes [is an obstacle]. Sometimes we have teachers that don’t realize that there are different learning styles and that different teaching styles would help accommodate those learning styles.

Not Motivated: One out of five teachers indicated that lack of motivation was an obstacle to some students. T5 indicated that the students who were not motivated to learn believed that they were not high achievers.

T5: Stereotypes [are obstacles]. Generally speaking I know I have 164 kids. Eight of mine failed this semester and all 8 were African American. It’s not that I’m
vindictive and have my finger pointed out with this particular group but a lot of times the kids believe that it’s stereotypical. You have to set them straight from the beginning.

I: What is this stereotype?
T5: [Stereotype is] not destined to fail but not as apt to perform.

Distractions: T3 stated that distractions occurred when the students’ friends attended other schools. She also indicated that family life became an issue as well because the students had to balance their time with their families and school work.

T3 Sometimes their friends caused problems because their friends are not [the dedicated academic magnet high school]. [Their friends] want …[the students at the dedicated academic magnet high school] to hang out. [Sometimes] family life [becomes a distraction]. It’s a culmination of several things. Sometimes …[the students] feel like even though they’re working hard they’re not getting the grades that they should receive. For example, I have students here who have a 2.8 and they say their friends are at another school and they’re not working nearly as hard and they have a 3.5. They’re constantly wondering should I go to my neighborhood school and be part of the top 10% or stay here and work harder and you know just barely make it. I think that that’s a struggle in a struggle that they’re having to deal with.

Nothing: T4 did not find that African American students had any obstacles for achieving academically.

T4: I don’t know if there are any obstacles to keep them from achieving. I think they are encouraged to achieve when they get here.
I: And who are they encouraged by?
T4: I think by their peers [and] by their teachers. Their parents obviously want them to get a good education or they wouldn’t be here. I think that they’re getting encouragement from all sectors. That’s what I see.

Administrators

The administrators were specifically asked: What factors do you feel have been obstacles to the academic achievement of African American students at this dedicated academic magnet high school? Their responses were categorized into three themes: lack of support, not motivated, and lack of study skills.
Two administrators indicated that African American students did not have support for learning. Support was delineated as family support to reinforce the importance of learning, financial support to assist learning (e.g., tutoring and educational supplies), and an adequate education from middle school.

Lack of Support: The administrators responded as follows:

A2: Non-parental support [and] …coming in with not a strong educational background from middle school [are obstacles for African American students.]

A3: I think …that …African American students who] don’t have that extra help [such as tutoring] … that maybe some other kids may have [do not have extra educational support for learning].

Not Motivated: One of the administrators indicated that some students were not motivated. Some students were not serious about attending this dedicated academic magnet high school. The students didn’t want to be there. She stated:

A2: [Some African American students are] not serious about school, [and] not serious about education. There are a lot of students that come here that don’t want to come here. Their parents want them to come here. Since it’s not a choice of their own, …[the students] try to actually fail so that they can leave.

Lack of Study Skills: The third administrator reported that the students’ study skills needed improvement to help them succeed in school. She indicated that the students specifically needed to improve their study habits.

A1: [African American students] weren’t accustomed to the study habits that they needed [and] the skills that they needed in order to excel here.

Research Question 5. What factors have contributed to students’ success?

Student Participants

The student participants’ responses were categorized into six themes: studying, others (e.g., parents, teachers, culture diversity, and friends), motivation, effective time management, listening skills, and effective note-taking skills.
Table 4.4

**Frequency Count of Factors That Have Been Obstacles to Students’ Success**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Workload</th>
<th>Theme #2 Time Management</th>
<th>Theme #3 Lack of Notetaking Skills</th>
<th>Theme #4 Lack of Comprehension Skills</th>
<th>Theme #5 Distractions</th>
<th>Theme #6 Lack of Listening Skills</th>
<th>Theme #7 Lack of Test Taking Skills</th>
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<td>Student Participants</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Non-participants</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Studying: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: I study a lot.

SP3: Well, the course helped me as far as my studying. Knowing how to look things Over [s helps me].

SP4: Well, the studying a little bit every day [helps me succeed].

SP6: Repetition skills [I learned from the] study skills [course] helps me.

SP7: I give myself enough study time during the day to review everything we’ve learned. Completing my homework so I can get more points in case I don’t do well on tests [helps].

SP8: Studying really hard [helps me]. Studying on my own gave me more time and patience.

SP9: I kind of slip up. But when push comes to shove I do homework.

SP10: Studying, working hard, … and making sure I understand everything my teachers discuss[ed] helped me succeed.

SP11: I study a lot. [That helps me succeed].

SP12: I had to really try [to succeed]. I go home every night and I study [for] … at least 2 or 3 hours.

SP13: Studying [and doing] … homework even on the weekends [and] whenever [I] … can [helped me succeed].
Motivation: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: I guess my motivation for going higher than a 2.5 makes me study.

SP2: I learned not to let obstacles get in my way of succeeding.

SP5: I have better grades after I took the [study skills] … class.

SP9: Just working hard [helped me succeed].

SP14: I guess since I’m really focused on my school work, I really put aside all … activities. I attend to my schoolwork. I put my work first.

SP15: Well, the 2.5 is a real factor to me because it pushes me. Without [the GPA requirement] … people really wouldn’t be pressured to learn more. [My mother] pushes me. [She says] oh you have to do this or you’re going to look for another school. She really pushes me. I think my determination [pushes me] because I really want to graduate from here. Everyone else’s determination for me … inspires [me] because no one … [from] my family … ever graduated from a type of school where you really had to push. I wanted to be the first to graduate from [this dedicated academic magnet high school].

Listening Skills: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: I …[pay attention in class] for taking tests.

SP8: I … tried to pay attention as much as I could.

SP10: Paying attention [helped me succeed].

SP13: Paying attention in class [helped me succeed].

Others: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP3: My mom helps me. [She] keeps me focused.

SP13: If I’m not successful, … I’ll disappoint myself and my parents.

SP15: My mother helps me a lot.

Effective Time Management: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP3: Well, the course helped me as far as … managing my time between track and school and [my] social life.

SP7: Just keeping ahead and not letting myself … fall behind [helps]. I just keep up with
what I’m doing.

Effective Note-taking Skills: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: I …take notes for taking tests. [That helped me succeed].
SP11: Reports … help me out.

Student Non-participants

The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into six themes: studying, others, motivation, effective time management, listening skills, and effective note-taking skills.

Studying: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: Studying [helped] me succeed.
NP2: [I get] tutored outside of school. That helped also.
NP4: [My parents] push me… [to] studying because this is a real hard school. It is.
NP6: [I am ] studying and focusing on getting out of high school so that I can go to college.
NP7: Good study habits … attributed to [my success].
NP8: Very hard studying [helped me succeed].
NP9: [Doing] research [helped me succeed].
NP11: I try to study for an exam.
NP12: Studying a lot [helped me succeed].
NP13: Well I usually do my homework.
NP14: [I get tutored in] algebra I.

Others: Ten out of fifteen student non-participants indicated that they succeeded because others helped them to succeed. Others include the students’ teachers, the cultural diversity of the student body, the school environment, parents and friends. Their
responses were:

NP1: The teachers [helped me succeed].

NP2: Well, my teachers … help me with after school tutoring. Friends help each other in class. [Teachers] make an appointment to meet with us either during our lunch period or either after school sometimes. Maybe if you just want …[to ask] … a few questions …they can help you out.

NP3: The culture, diversity, … and the environment is real. Everybody [helps].

NP4: My parents and friends … push … [me].

NP7: Friends [and] helpful teachers … [are] factors that attributed [to my success].

NP8: My parents at home … [helped me to succeed]. [They tell me] don’t bring home any bad grades.

NP10: I think my mother’s expectation and her always wanting me to do good and her being there like to comfort me if I do bad at something and to encourage me to go on is a big factor [for helping me succeed]. My friends here, and the fact that it’s …a good environment and everyone is always helping you. It’s very loving here. It really is.

NP12: My friends have a big part to do with my success at [the dedicated magnet high school].

NP14: My friends help me in tutoring and my teachers [help me too].

NP15: My parents help.

Motivation: Motivation was a factor in the students’ success at the dedicated academic magnet high school. Three out of fifteen student non-participants stated:

NP4: Really the motivation from my parents and friends [encourage me] to stay here.

NP10: I think my mother’s expectation [helped me succeed].

NP15: My parents motivate me to work hard. I want to be able …to get scholarships.
Effective Time Management: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP7: You know you can still study for different tests … a couple of weeks ahead of time or just work. Use your time wisely. Don’t waste it.

NP11: Normally when I [get]… home from school, I’ll … do my homework. Then I try to study for an exam [for] … next week because I normally have … three or four a week. It’s just easier and less stressful [to prepare].

Listening Skills: The student non-participant’ response was as follows:

NP5: Paying attention …[helped me succeed].

Effective Note-taking Skills: The student non-participant response was as follows:

NP9: Taking notes [helped me succeed].

The student participants and student non-participants agreed that studying, managing their time effectively, and taking effective notes helped them to succeed in school.

For the student participants, completing homework assignments, reading assignments, comprehending information, and using skills learned from the study skills class enhanced their study habits. For the student non-participants, studying included getting tutored, completing homework assignments, and preparing for quizzes and tests. The responses from the interviews indicated that the student participants used more listening skills in classes than the student non-participants. Both groups were motivated to achieve academically and focused on graduating.

For motivation, the student participants relied less on external factors than the student non-participants. Three out of fifteen student participants were motivated to succeed by pleasing their parents, focusing on graduating from this dedicated academic magnet high school, and meeting the GPA criterion.
The student non-participants relied more on others than the student participants to help them succeed. They relied on their family and friends to help them through the learning process. The student non-participants depended on their teachers and peers to clarify misconceptions. One non-participant found a way to become successful by becoming a team member on the state championship track team. See Table 4.5 for factors that have contributed to the students’ success.

Teachers

The teachers were asked: What factors do you feel contributed to the academic achievement of African American students at this dedicated academic magnet high school? Their responses were categorized into two themes: motivation and diversity.

The teachers indicated that motivation and diversity enhanced the academic achievement of the African American students. Students were motivated to succeed from their parents, teachers, and themselves. Two teachers indicated that diversity allowed them to encounter different learning experiences and that their culture added to the diversity. Their responses were as follows:

Motivation: The teachers’ responses were as follows:

T1: Well, self-motivation, parental involvement and teacher encouragement [help students succeed.] We have advisory classes 6 times per year at each grade level where students are given career instruction appropriate for their classifications. In these sessions, teacher encouragement is extremely important. I mention advisement because some teachers see these sessions as a waste of time and convey that attitude to their students. However, those teachers who really take it seriously have produced in their students the attitude that “I” must begin preparing now for college and beyond,” and “What I do in school now still have a definite impact upon me tomorrow.” It’s real easy to say that a kid can’t learn but it’s also not so hard to get a little bit involved and give a student personal encouragement. After that you can see whether working one-on-one with a particular student is wasted effort. African American kids tend to be kind of “in-your-face” honest and that really turns some teachers off. Students are written up for what some teachers perceive as disrespect when encouragement might have deflected the negative
behavior.

T2: One of the major contributors would be parent[al] involvement. Parents who know when the report cards are coming home, know when activities at the school are going on and are very involved in their students learning [help their children succeed.]

T3: Partly due to their sense of belonging, I think that [the students] … feel like the teachers want them to succeed. I think [students are] … getting encouraged [from] a lot of outside forces as well as from … themselves.

Diversity: The teachers’ responses were as follows:

T4: I think just being in with all sorts of people helps rather than [being around] just one group.

T5: Diversity for sure [has helped them succeed.] We have … African American history,… African American literature, and African American studies to get them involved in their culture.

Administrators

The administrators were asked: What factors do you feel contributed to the academic achievement of African American students at this dedicated academic magnet high school? Their responses were categorized into three themes: high achievers, motivation, and study habits.

The administrators indicated that the students were successful because they were high academic achievers, had effective study habits, and were motivated to succeed. One administrator described the students as “smart.” Another indicated that students excelled in elementary and middle school and those experiences prepared them to succeed in high school. Motivation was described as support from home. Their parents emphasized the importance of education. An administrator stated that students who were successful were dedicated and committed to a goal.

High Achievers: The administrators’ responses were as follows:
A2: Students who feel that an education is important, …[have] a good background … elementary and middle school, [and] …know what education is …all about [are ready to succeed at a dedicated academic magnet high school].

Administrator 3 described high achieving students as “smart” students.

A3: [They’re] getting the best possible education [at this dedicated academic magnet high school]. [The students are] smart. [They] have to have certain profiles to get in here.

Motivation: One administrator stated:

A2: Dedication and commitment to goals they set [help them succeed].

Study Habits: She continued as follows:

A2: [Knowing] how to study [helped students succeed].

Research Question 6. What study skills are used by students?

Research questions 6a-6j were asked to student participants and student non-participants about specific study skills they used for learning. Their responses are listed below:

Table 4.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Others</th>
<th>Theme #2 Listening Skills</th>
<th>Theme #3 Motivation</th>
<th>Theme #4 Effective Time Management</th>
<th>Theme #5 Effective Note-taking Skills</th>
<th>Theme #6 Studying</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>23</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 6a. How do students prepare for quizzes and tests?

Student Participants

The student participants’ responses were categorized into three themes: study, use notes, and listen.

Study: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: I basically sometimes memorize the definitions and words.

SP2: If I have a question, I ask because I don’t understand sometimes.

SP3: [I] make sure I got everything [to study].

SP4: I would read the chapters the night before or …two days before [I take a test].

SP5: [I] study the handouts, worksheets, [and] anything that the teacher gives [me]. [I] study those [and] reread the chapters .

SP6: I constantly read the questions and put the answer. I change the question to a statement and put the answer.

SP7: Well at home … after …eating, …I just go into the room. I …study … and I just read over everything we’ve learned. [I review] all [of] my notes that I’ve taken. Sometimes …I’ll ask my dad to help me. If I don’t get it … I’ll review with my friends.

SP8: [I] study at the last minute. I just cram all the time. [I’ll] review and study the night before.

SP9: Well, it depends on the class [that determines how I prepare for quizzes and tests]. Just like some classes I don’t need to study as much as others. For instance … right now [in] physics and advanced math, I have to sit down and practice problems. Those are my toughest classes. I would review problems. I basically review and review until I get it. With English and history, I really don’t study that much. I have to learn it while I’m studying it and it sticks after I learn it.

SP10: [I] try to remember… the important things [the teacher] … said. [I] read through the chapter. [I] just keep going over it so that I can understand it.

SP11: I study. I take an hour off and study. Then I … do something [else] … to keep me going. Then I come back to it. [I] pick up where I left and start … studying [again].
SP12: I read the chapter and I outline … [it]. I just go on the internet and I use some things to help me. I try to take time to prepare, [get] … a good night’s rest, and study for a couple of hours.

SP13: If your teacher lets [me] … know in advance that [I’m] … going to have a quiz [I] … start studying that day.

SP14: I would read the chapter all over again [to prepare for quizzes and tests]. For a class like math, I’ll make my own problems.

SP15: I can give definitions back [to my mom].

Use Notes: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: Well, sometimes I use note cards and put the definitions on them or I just use the papers that I copied the notes on.

SP2: I copy notes [when I prepare for quizzes and tests].

SP3: I take notes to the best of my ability and then I compare them with other people.

SP4: [I] go over my notes.

SP5: [I] make flashcards of the chapters and worksheets.

SP7: [I would review] all [of] my notes that I’ve taken.

SP8: [I] look over some notes. I’ll call a few friends and see if they have … any more notes then … I have so I’ll have more notes to study from.

SP10: I go over notes that we took.

SP13: [I] take … lots of notes [to prepare for quizzes and tests].

SP14: Now for tests like Spanish, I use note cards. [For] English … [I] look over my notes and then rewrite [them]. Then I may look over [them] … again.

SP15: I look over all my notes that I take in class.

Listen: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP4: [I listen while I’m] reading out loud. [That] really helped me [prepare for my quizzes and tests].

SP13: Paying attention in … the class [helped me prepare for quizzes and tests].
Student Non-participants

The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into four themes: study, use notes, listen, and pray.

Study: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: By studying in advance [is how I prepare for quizzes and tests. When I first get the work, … I go over everything.

NP2: [I] just review all of my …quizzes…[to prepare] for the test.

NP4: Mainly I’ll read the chapters and review the homework.

NP5: [When I prepare for quizzes and tests] I go over the material … and if I don’t understand I’ll ask the teacher. When I’m studying at home … I guess you can say [I] talk to myself so I will remember the information.

NP7: Studying [helps me prepare for quizzes and tests]. Most teachers give you an advanced [notice of] when you will have a quiz or a test. I just study a couple of weeks before time and take all of my books home. That usually makes me successful.

NP8: [I] just study a lot. [I study for …hours. If you keep up then you won’t have a problem. You know if you stay ahead of the game, …participate in class, [and] [participate in] discussions then you won’t have a problem on your quizzes or tests.

NP9: [I] just go over the things that the teacher has given us and do practice problems. [I] study.

NP10: Usually like the day before the teacher … gives us … a review. If I don’t understand …that’s when I ask a question. I [also] just take my textbook home and just go home and review it myself.

NP11: Normally when I get home I try to review … what I did that day so when I study later on during the week it’s fresh in my mind and I know what I’m doing. This is how I prepare for quizzes and tests.

NP12: [I pay] attention in class. I don’t really study a lot because I feel if I study like too long and … try to cram everything in my head I’m going to forget it. So I … just pay attention in class because I have a good memory.

NP13: I would do my homework and I would just go over it. [I would] look over it to make sure that I know what was really going on in class.
NP14: I go to a quiet section in my house. I study my notes that I have taken in class.

Use Notes: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP2: When our teacher gives us notes I review those and depending on what class it is I may make some note cards. [I] just review all of my notes.

NP3: I really take notes rather than look in a book because I find notes [are] easier to study than reading a book.

NP6: I make note cards for … other subjects.

NP7: [I] take notes.

NP15: I read my notes more than once.

Listen: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP10: I’m like very attentive … in class … [when the teachers] … review everything.

NP12: [I] pay attention in class.

Pray: One non-participant responded as follows:

NP15: Right before the test I pray.

**Table 4.6a**

**Frequency Count of Preparation for Quizzes and Tests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Study</th>
<th>Theme #2 Use Notes</th>
<th>Theme #3 Listen</th>
<th>Theme #4 Pray</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Participants</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Non-</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participants</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 6b. What do students do in classes in which the teacher lectures?

The student participants’ responses were categorized into four themes: take notes, listen, ask questions, and memorized the lecture.

Take Notes: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: I take notes. It depends on how they lecture because sometimes they have notes on the overhead and you just write them down and they talk about the lesson. But most of the time, I just take notes.

SP2: I copy notes.

SP3: I take notes to the best of my ability and then I compare them with other people and make sure I got everything.

SP4: Well I try to take notes sometimes.

SP5: While [the teachers are] lecturing we would take notes even though … you don’t have to write word for word [of] what they say. When the teacher is [saying] “this is important or remember this,” that’s what [I] … would write.

SP6: I just write all the notes. Then I go home and I fold the paper and I put on one side the questions [and] change the statement to a question …on the other side. I put an answer and I flip it and like make a little test out of it.

SP7: When my teacher lectures, I jot down [what] … she repeats. I assume [those things] …would be on the test. Everything … she says we have to know, I write [those things]…down.

SP8: I’ll take notes.

SP9: I … take notes.

SP10: [I] jot down notes.

SP11: As [the teacher] lectured we’d take notes on whatever she sayed. We always did that. Everything she taught us we would [write] from the time class start[ed] until the time class [ended].

SP12: I take notes on the chapter.

SP13: [I take] notes [when the teacher lectures]. [I] don’t write down everything she says because you know it’s too much writing. [There are] certain things that you know you need to remember. [I] write [those things].
SP14: [The teacher] always give us study guides for midterm exams and finals. What I would do is go back to my notebook and then … make a note of [those things].

Sp15: [I] take lots of notes.

Listen: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: Sometimes I listen to what they’re saying.

SP4: I really try to pay attention.

SP8: [I] try to pay attention.

SP9: I listen.

SP10: [I] listen. Sometimes I don’t pay attention that much.

I: What happens when you listen?

SP10: I get better grades.

I: [What happens] when you don’t listen?

SP10: I get a bad grade.

SP12: I pay attention.

SP15: I listen.

Ask Questions: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP2: If I have to ask a question, I ask because I don’t understand sometimes.

SP6: If [the teacher] asks a question, I write the question down and I write the answer down.

SP8: I’ll probably ask a question at the end of the class about something that’s confusing.

SP13: [I] ask questions.

Memorize the Lecture: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP14: Well, since I have a very good memory, I hardly take notes. I remember mostly what is being said. [I] mostly remember the key points of the lecture. I’ll always relate to [those key points] when I take a test. That’s the way I study for a test. I remember mostly what [the teachers] say, so [there is] no need for me to take notes on a lecture.
Student Non-participants

The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into four themes: take notes, listen, memorize the lecture, and ask questions.

Take Notes: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: I’m busy taking notes.

NP2: When [the teacher] lectures … [in my English class], …we take notes. [In my] physics class … we take notes.

NP3: I do a lot of note taking. I can’t remember to bring a tape recorder everyday.

NP4: [I] try to take as many notes from [my teacher when she lectures]. I try to just get … key words that she points out and find out where she’s getting the [information] … from.

NP5: [I] take notes. If I hear the teacher repeat something more than once I make sure I put a star by that and study that.

NP6: I’ll just take notes. I just [write] … everything that I think is important.

NP7: I don’t have a lot of teachers that lecture a whole lot but the ones that I do have, I take a lot of notes and from those notes I usually study for quizzes or tests and those things that will be graded. I just try to write them down as I go. I don’t really have a system.

NP8: [For] lecture classes are, …[I] basically just take notes. [I] take notes, take notes, take notes. You can just tell which …factors … are important … in a lecture. Sometimes [the teacher will] say this is important. But other then that you just take notes of what you think is important. That’s basically what you do in a lecture class.

NP9: I take notes.

NP10: Like this year was the first year that I actually had a teacher that lectured without giving notes so I had to take my own notes. I did very well in that class.

NP11: I … write notes and then just go home and go over the notes to recall what the teacher said.

NP12: I take lots of notes.

NP13: I took notes on what I thought was important. [I take notes on] things that really
stuck out or that [the teacher] stressed.

NP14: I take … lots of notes. I write what I hear is important.

NP15: Most [of the] time, I take notes and I’ve thought about recording but I’ve only done that once or twice and that’s about it [when the teacher lectures.]

I: You have a process for taking notes?

NP15: Not really it just depends on how the teacher, you know, is talking about stuff that she has like a subject matter. She’s talking about I do a subject bullet or if she’s comparing something I’ll do Cornell notes or something like that.

I: Where did you learn how to do Cornell notes?

NP15: In middle school, I had a teacher that did do study skills. It wasn’t necessarily a complete course, but it, it was study skills.

Listen: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: I try to listen.

NP5: [I] listen [when the teacher lectures].

NP9: [I] listen.

NP10: I try to listen. Some teachers … speak in monotone so it’s very boring. I just try my best to listen. Just listening to [my teacher enabled me] to learn.

NP11: I try to listen.

NP12: I just pay real, real close attention to what [the teachers] say.

Memorize the Lecture: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP12: [To make sure I remember every word the teacher says I], tape record [the Lecture] sometimes.

Ask Questions: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP8: If [I] … have a question, [I] ask a question.

See Table 4.6b for the frequency count of student participants’ and student non-participants’ responses of study skills used in lecture classes.
Table 4.6b

**Frequency Count of Study Skills in Lecture Classes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Take Notes</th>
<th>Theme #2 Listen</th>
<th>Theme #3 Memorize the Lecture</th>
<th>Theme #4 Ask Questions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Participants</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Non-participants</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 4.6c.** What processes do students use in learning new information?

Both student participants and student non-participants studied, used critical thinking skills, took notes, and listened to develop an understanding of the new information. One out of fifteen student participants used the dictionary to delineate unfamiliar words. None of the student non-participants used a dictionary to help them learn new information. See Table 4.6c for the frequency count for student participants’ responses and student non-participant responses.

**Student Participants**

The student participants’ responses were categorized into five themes: study, use critical thinking skills, take notes, listen, and use the dictionary.

**Study:** The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: [I] study [the new information].

SP2: If it is something I’m familiar with I might not study as long. I make sure I study … a little longer [if I don’t] … understand … [the new information].

SP3: [I study new information by] going over it, … [and] ….over [it] … and over [it].

SP4: Repetition [is] …the best method for me in doing everything.
SP5: I make songs. It’s something I learned because I like to sing even though I can’t sing. If I make a song about English or a story that we just read, I remember it easier.

SP6: I just read over it. That’s all.

SP8: I don’t really take in new information … because I don’t catch on as fast as other students. [I] review … that night.

SP9: I try to plan steps in physics or math. I try to visualize [new information].

SP11: As [the teacher] … tells me things I repeat it over and over in my head so I get it. When I’ve gotten it, it’s like boom I know it already. If she asks me a question I know offhand the answer.

SP12: Well, … my friends [and I] … get together. We go over what we learned.

SP13: [I process new information by] writing it down [and] … ask[ing] questions.

SP14: My process in learning new information is to read it.

Use Critical Thinking Skills: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: I learn how to do the problem. I work on [math] problems … at home.

SP2: If it is something I never learned, then I spend extra time on it. [I] make sure I understand it.

SP7: When I get something new I have to learn how to do it or they have to show me everything about it before I can grasp it. When I start doing it, I learn all the details.

SP8: If I can stay after school and ask [I will]. If I have a question at home, I write it down. I come back the next day and ask.

SP9: I try to see how [new information] … applies to me. It helps me to understand more. When [the teacher] just throws out information, it’s kind of hard for me to process. But once I … understand how it …relates to me I understand it better.

SP10: I try to understand it. [I] ask questions.

SP13: I ask questions. [I] get [my teacher] … to explain it until …[I] understand it.

SP15: When I learn new information I try to break it down to my understanding because at first I might not understand it. I’ll go to the dictionary and encyclopedia or try to find some other source to help me understand it. I put it in my own words.
That will help me understand it better.

Take Notes: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: I write the information down.

SP6 I write the notes.

SP8: I just take notes.

SP10: [I learn new information when the teacher’s] repeating stuff right out of the notes [that I’ve already taken].

SP12: I write down notes also.

SP14: I write certain notes over and over again until it’s just stuck in my head.

Listen: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP10: Well, I listen more closely [when I’m given new information].

Use the Dictionary: The student participant’ response was as follows:

SP15: I’ll go to the dictionary … help me understand … [new information].

Student Non-participants

The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into four themes: study, use critical thinking skills, take notes, and listen.

Study: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: I read [the new information] and go over the words.

NP2: I review … at home so that I can prepare for my test.

NP3: If it’s an interesting course, like psychology or African American studies or American history because I’m pretty good in history I can just read …it because I do like to read … interesting things [about] …the news and … current events.

NP4: I try to go over it as many times as I can.

NP5: I just go over the information more than once
NP6: [I learn new information when] I’m studying [it].

NP7: For new information, I study it every night until I learn it.

NP9: [I] read, read, read.

NP10: I think I’m a good reader too, like I read and just learn. [ ]

NP11: Normally I have to read something over and over and over again so I can get it.

NP12: [I] try to remember it. [I] don’t try to put everything in … [my] head on test day or the night before the test.

NP13: Looking over it as soon as I get [is how I learn new information].

Use Critical Thinking Skills: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: For math, [I learn] how to write out the problem. I’ll go over that. By looking over examples in the book and some of the section problems, [is how I work with new information].

NP5: I just go over the information … until I understand and if I don’t understand I’ll ask the teacher.

NP8: New information is something that is fresh in my mind. I have a chance to participate in a conversation or discussion in class about something that’s new which usually helps me get the information down better.

NP10: I just try to dissect it I guess and understand. I ask questions that might be in the book to try to see if I know it because I think that [it] … would be on the test.

NP13: I … [make] sure I understand it.

I: If you don’t understand it what do you do?

NP13: I just keep on looking over it and reading over it and if … [I still don’t understand it] I go to tutoring or ask the teacher about it.

Take Notes: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP2: When the teacher gives the notes sometimes it helps to go back and look in your books because in my physics class we don’t use the book that often. I just review those [notes].

NP6: I might write it over and over again and then make … note cards [when I learn new information].
NP7: [I use] the same note-taking strategy, I usually take notes [when I learn new information.]

NP12: I just write down whatever is on the overhead. I just write it down.

Listen: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP14: I listen for … specific words that are important and take those into account.

NP15: I just try to pay attention as much as possible.

The student participants’ and student non-participants’ frequency counts of processes used in learning new information are displayed in Table 4.6c.

**Research Question 4.6d. What are the students’ weekly activities for preparing for school including the weekend?**

Both student groups studied and completed their homework assignments. Two of the student participants followed a schedule to assure that all assignments were completed. One out of fifteen student participants went to the library to prepare for a class assignment. One participant went to the library to prepare for a class assignment.

**Table 4.6c**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1: Study</th>
<th>Theme #2: Take Notes</th>
<th>Theme #3: Use Critical Thinking Skills</th>
<th>Theme #4: Listen</th>
<th>Theme #5: Use the Dictionary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student participants</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Non-participants</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Participants

The student participants’ responses were categorized into four themes: study, do homework, manage time, and go to the library.

Study: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: Well, I … study for the test.

SP2: I study.

SP4: [I] do a little studying. [I’m] not up all night studying.

SP5: [I call my] group member [to review].

SP6: I study what the teacher … talked about the day before. I’ll be prepared for any questions that she has.

SP7: I review and then I’ll go to bed.

SP8: If I have a test I study the night before.

SP9: [I do] whatever I need to do Sunday night. I … study.

SP10: I make sure if I have a test coming up on Monday, I study …Sunday night.

SP12: I make sure I have …, my textbooks, …my notebooks…and my book sack [so that I can …study].

SP13: [I prepare for school by] reviewing what [I] … learned in class.

SP15: [I] study.

Do Homework: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: If I haven’t made note cards, I’ll make note cards [when I do my homework].

SP2: If I have something I have to complete for Monday, I do it Sunday. During the week, I do my homework.

SP3: I do my homework at the beginning of the weekend.

SP4: It’s kind of the same day to day. [I] just do my homework when I have it.

SP5: Well Monday through Friday, …[I] do the basic homework. If I have a lot of homework [during the weekend] I’ll start on it Saturday. Sunday after
church … I just stay home and do all the homework.

SP6: I do my work for the next day.

SP7: From five until however long it takes me … I do my homework.

SP8: Hopefully I try to do [homework] the day it’s assigned because we have block schedules which basically makes me procrastinate. So I end up doing it like all at one time.

SP10: I just do my homework every night.

SP13: [I prepare for school by] doing homework.

SP15: For the week days I make sure I’ve done all of my homework for that class. I go over all my homework.

Manage Time: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP10: On Sundays I get my books together and make sure I have all of the right books for class on Monday. [I] make sure if I have a test coming up on Monday, I study for that Sunday night.

SP14: Well, when something has a due date I usually try to do it as quickly as I can just so I have … more free time. [If] I haven’t done something it seems as if time runs out on me.

Go to the Library: The student participant’ response was as follows:

SP5: I go … to the library … and do all the homework and [work on] … projects.

Student Non-participants

The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into two themes: study and do homework.

Study: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: During the week I study soon as I get home from school and during the weekend if I have work I’ll study but on Sunday nights I study. On Saturday I really don’t study.

NP2: Studying [is part of my weekly activity for preparing for school].

NP3: [I] read up on my notes because I know I have a test or a pop quiz coming up
pretty soon.

NP4: On the weekend if I have a test [on Monday]…I’ll study.  [If I don’t have a test on Monday …I’ll just take the weekend off to clear my head. During the week I’ll … [get] ready for … tests.

NP5: Well on the weekend if I have a test coming up I’ll study.

NP6: On the weekend I’ll study my lesson.

NP8: I dance every day. [When] I come home … I study. I don’t really study on weekends except for Sundays. Sunday is a big studying day [for] going over my information, gathering myself, [and] getting ready for the next week.

NP10: [When I have] any tests I … wait …to study for it last … [so] it’s more on my mind …[before] … I fall asleep.

NP11: I try to do all my studying over the weekend.

NP12: For weekly activities … I study sometimes. I don’t usually study on the weekends. I take my mind off of school.

NP14: I spend two hours a day studying each subject.

Do Homework: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP2: I have all of my work in order for Monday if I know [what I need] for the weekend. [I] make sure I complete all my work.

NP3: I pretty much do my homework everyday [if] I have [homework]. On the weekends I probably do any work [and] any projects … that I’ll have if I’m not running [at] a track meet. At night, since I’ll be going to work, … I’ll probably take my homework to work with me or I’ll be finish [it] when I get home.

NP5: During the weekdays I just [do] my homework.

NP7: Usually when I go home everyday, I do my homework.

NP8: I do the work that is necessary for the next day. Sometimes I’ll finish [it] in class. I’ll have my homework out of the way.

NP9: [I do my] homework … [and make] sure that I have everything I need for the next day.

NP10: Well, I take a nap when I go home but when I get up I do my homework. Saturday I don’t do homework at all but Sunday. I always have a lot of homework
to do on Sunday.

NP11: [I] do my homework on the weekdays.

NP12: I usually do my homework on Sundays … for the next week.

NP13: [I] just do … the homework that was assigned and make sure that I’m prepared for everything.

NP15: I … do all my homework at night. On Sundays I do most of my school work and prepare for school.

See Table 4.6d for the frequency counts of weekly activities for preparing for school including the weekend.

**Table 4.6d**

*Frequency Count of Weekly Activities in Preparation for School*  
**Including the Weekend**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Study</th>
<th>Theme #2 Do Homework</th>
<th>Theme #3 Manage Time</th>
<th>Theme #4 Go to the Library</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Participants</td>
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<td>Student Non-participants</td>
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</table>

Research Question 4.6e. What processes do students use for studying including the amount of time they study weekly?

Both student groups completed homework and used time management to complete all assignments. Two of the fifteen student participants received tutoring services. One out of fifteen student non-participants listened to the lectures and one non-participant needed motivation from his father to help him complete his homework assignment. See Table 4.6e for the frequency count of studying including the amount of time studied weekly.
Student Participants

The student participants’ responses were categorized into three themes: do homework, get tutored, and manage time.

**Do Homework:** The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: I go over [my lessons] two days before [I take my test]. I just basically do my note cards before the test. [I study] maybe eight hours [a week].

SP2: I start my homework maybe around 4:30 and I finish around 7. [I do this] four days a week.

SP3: Well, really I just do my homework. [I study] about maybe two hours a night.

SP5: I’ll reread the chapter [and] make like flash cards of the vocabulary words. [I study] per day maybe an hour [during the week]. [I study] maybe five or six hours between Saturday and Sunday.

SP6: I just [take] statements [and] turn [them into] questions. [I turn] questions … into statements. [I] constantly read over [what I’ve done]. I study about two hours a day so I will know the material. [On] the weekend [I study] about an hour.

SP8: I use note cards. Whenever I can [I] just use flash card. [I] review. [I] probably make a system … using initials or …if I have a fill-in-the-blank sheet [I] just memorize it. [I] try to memorize my notes. That’s kind of time consuming but sometimes it works. I study ten to twelve hours a week.

SP9: The amount of time [I] put in [is] either [for] reviewing work or studying for a test. [I study] about eight hour [a week].

SP10: Yes ma’am [I include reviewing my homework and preparing for quizzes and tests when I study]. [I study] probably …five hours [a week].

SP11: My process of studying is reviewing … chapters [and] reviewing … tests. [I study] two or three hours a day.

SP14: I always study when I finish my written assignments. I usually study two hours a day.

**Get Tutored:** The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP5: We have tutoring after [track] practice. One of the coaches do math tutoring for us … after school.
SP6: My mom will ask me questions and I just tell her the answers.

Manage Time: A student replied as follows:

SP1: [To review for a test], I go over it two days before [the test is given].

Student Non-participants

The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into three themes: do homework, listen to lectures, and manage time.

Do Homework: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP3: If I read … something and [if] … it’s interesting to me, it stays in my mind because I have a good memory. [If] it’s not interesting I just take notes and just go over the notes …so they’ll be there for a while.

NP4: I’ll be just reviewing and going over problems.

NP6: I make note cards [for studying].

NP7: I spend at least six hours a night studying. That …includes homework …[and] LEAP [review].

NP9: I just go by what I need to do. Sometimes [I] … don’t have a lot of work. Sometimes [I] … do.

NP10: I read or sometimes me one of my close friends … we might talk on the phone and just ask each other questions back and forth for a major, major test. Oh that would help both of us prepare.

NP11: I have to read everything over and over and over again to grasp information.

NP12: I just bring all my notes home and I look over them real, real good.

Listen to Lectures: A student non-participant responded as follows:

NP12: I just listen in class.

Manage Time: Another student non-participant response was as follows:

NP15: For studying I normally make a schedule. I write it out so what’s most important. If I have a biology test on Thursday and an English test on Wednesday, I would study for English before I’d study for biology.
Table 4.6e
Frequency Count for Studying Including the Amount of Time Studied Weekly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Theme #1 Do Homework</th>
<th>Theme #2 Get Tutored</th>
<th>Theme #3 Listen to Lectures</th>
<th>Theme #4 Manage Time</th>
<th>Theme #5 Get Motivated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Student Participants</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Non-Participants</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 4.6f. What do students do when they are introduced to unfamiliar concepts?”

Student participants and student non-participants used critical thinking skills and listened to learn new concepts. Three out of fifteen student non-participants read and received tutoring to help them gain a better understanding of the new material as compared to one out of fifteen student participants. Five out of the fifteen student participants used the library to conduct further research. None of the student non-participants reported that they used the library to learn unfamiliar concepts. See Table 4.6f for the frequency counts of actions taken with unfamiliar concepts. The students’ responses were as follows:

**Student Participants**

The student participants’ responses were categorized into five themes: critical thinking skills, use library, get tutored, listen, and read.

Use Critical Thinking Skills: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: Well, I ask how to do the problems, if I don’t understand. [I] keep on trying, if I still don’t understand. [To understand], I just work on the problems that I’ve learned and [use] some examples … to make sure I understand it.

SP2: I ask questions about it.

SP3: If I don’t understand [the unfamiliar concepts], then I ask the teacher.
SP4: I just dwell on it until I get it and if I don’t get it, I’m just lost.
I: Do you ask your teachers questions when it’s unfamiliar?
SP4: Sometimes I do.

SP7: [If it’s] something I don’t know about I ask somebody about it. I ask my teachers and if they don’t give me a straight answer, I’ll go home and ask one of my parents. Sometimes my friends [may] know about it. I’ll ask them.

SP8: Most of the time I just sit there and look puzzled. I try to ask a friend because I’ll probably learn more... a peer. If I don’t completely understand it I[will]ask the teacher. But very seldom, I’ll ask. I just sit there in class and .... try to make myself understand it and if I don’t, that’s when I ask.

SP9: I try to relate [unfamiliar concepts] to me.

SP10: I think about it. [I] try to understand it and make sure I know it. I just really pay attention to it. If I have questions about it I ask the teacher or I get my peers to help me understand it.

SP11: If I don’t understand something I would call my teacher to the side and I would ask her about that problem.

SP12: I ask the teacher about it.

SP13: I ask questions in class. I ask … friends to explain it because sometimes when you have someone of your age explain it you can understand it better.

SP14: I’ll try to understand or … [ask the teacher]a question about it. [I] ask for a lot of clarification.

SP15: First, I ask the teacher to help me understand it better or put it in different words. Once [that’s] done, … I try to understand it myself.

Use Library: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP2: [I] try and read more information about it [in the library]… on the internet.

SP7: I’ll look up information in the library.

SP10: [I do my research] on the internet [in the library].

SP13: [I get my books to research unfamiliar concepts from] the library.

SP15: I try to understand [the unfamiliar concepts] myself or like I said either go to the dictionary or encyclopedia and then that will help me understand it better.
Get Tutored: One student participant responded as follows:

SP3: If I don’t understand … [I] go to tutoring.

Listen: A student participant responded as follows:

[I] pay attention [when I am introduced to unfamiliar concepts].

Read: A student participant responded as follows:

SP6: If I don’t know a word I go look it up or research it.
I: Where do you look it up?
SP6: I would look in the dictionary. I might look on the internet and just research.

Student Non-participants

The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into five themes: use critical thinking skills, get tutored, read, take notes, and listen.

Use Critical Thinking Skills: The student non-participants’ responded as follows:

NP1: I try to figure it out on my own. [I] will ….write a question similar to that question.

NP2: First, I try to understand. If I still don’t understand … then I’ll ask the teacher for help or one of my classmates for help if I feel that if I just get a couple more things to understand that would help me. I’ll just ask one of my classmates to help.

NP3: I attempt the homework. When it’s time for a test, I will go back over it. I have the answer and I have the problem and I see actually how [the teacher] got it. That’s how I prepare.

NP4: I ask the teacher or a friend to help me with it.

NP5: [I] ask questions to the teacher or to the students …[to] understand.

NP7: I usually ask the teachers [to] help. If the teacher really can’t help me or [if] I don’t understand their concept of teaching then I’ll ask for help [from my friends].

NP8: I usually ask, I would ask for an explanation …from the teacher. What is this concept? How is this different from another concept that we’ve already done? How can it benefit me? And then if I had known someone who has the concept, then … I’ll ask them. You know how can this help? What’s an easier to get the concept down? So that’s basically it.
I: Would that person be a classmate?
NP8: Usually a classmate [or] sometimes a teacher.

NP9: I go to people who understand it and ask them to help me.

NP10: I ask questions about what I don’t understand to try to understand it better. I ask questions after it’s been explained and I try to listen while it’s explained to make sense of …[it] myself. If I encounter a problem then I might ask for help. Usually …I ask another student … before I ask the teacher. If …[the teacher] explain[s] it the same way [I] … still won’t understand it.

NP11: I normally ask my teacher or go and ask my dad or my sister.

NP13: I try to understand it myself [when I’m introduced to unfamiliar concepts]. Like I try to look over it and make myself learn it and if I can’t I’ll ask the teacher about it.

NP15: If I don’t understand I do ask questions.

Get Tutored: The student non-participants responded as follows:

NP6: Most of the time I go to a tutor at [the dedicated academic magnet high school] and the tutor here will help.
I: Is that a student or a teacher?
NP6: It use to be teachers but now it’s students from LSU.
I: Is this offered during the week and how often?
NP6: I only go to math tutoring on Tuesdays so I don’t know what else is offered.

NP9: [I] stay for tutoring [with my teacher to get an understanding of unfamiliar concepts].

NP14: [I] try to find help so I can go over [the unfamiliar concepts].
I: And who are these people that might help you?
NP14: Friends and family [help me].
I: Do you ask your teachers sometimes?
NP14: Yeah, but it, it doesn’t always work.
I: And why is that?
NP14: The way they teach it I don’t understand and the way somebody [else] teach[es] it, I might understand the way they do it.

Read: The student non-participants responded as follows:

NP1: I read examples [to understand unfamiliar concepts].

NP3: I’ll just read [the information] while I write it. If I write something in math I’ll read it while I write. I attempt the homework.
NP11: I try to read it and read [it] and read it if I don’t get it.

Take Notes: A student non-participant responded as follows:

NP3: [I] really pay attention to the notes [that I’ve taken when I’m trying to understand unfamiliar concepts].

Listen: One student non-participant responded as follows:

NP15: I pay attention …if I don’t understand [unfamiliar concepts].

Table 4.6f

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Use Library</th>
<th>Theme #2 Read</th>
<th>Theme #3 Get Tutored</th>
<th>Theme #4 Take Notes</th>
<th>Theme #5 Use Critical Thinking Skills</th>
<th>Theme #6 Listen</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Student Non-Participants</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 4.6g. How do students display information that has lots of information or is difficult to understand with words?”

Both student groups memorized and outlined information to display data. Twelve out of the fifteen student participants graphed the data as compared to four out of fifteen student non-participants. Three out of the fifteen student participants indicated that they used various methods to display information. Twelve out of fifteen student participants reported that they also used various methods: used cliff notes; asked questions; read; and were tutored. See Table 4.6g for the frequency count of displayed information. The student participants’ responses and student non-participants’ responses were as follows:
**Student Participants**

The student participants’ responses were categorized into four themes: graphs, outlines, various methods, and memorization.

**Graphs: Student participants responded as follows:**

SP2: I can do a chart of the material.

SP3: We had to [create a] bar graph in computer science.

SP4: I like … plotting points. If I have to use a graph … to do homework at night [and it’s] required and it’s easier to look at, sometimes I would [use graphs]. So just to keep time down, [I will draw graphs to keep from] looking back and forth at the board.

SP5: I know we did … bar graphs … with … history and the different climates but we don’t really use charts so much after ninth grade.

SP7: If it was a project …I’d probably display it …on a graph or some kind of chart that’s easier to organize.

SP9: [I use charts and graphs] when I have to. It’s not something that I sit down and do myself. It’s … only after I’m told to do it that I do.

SP10: I use graphs … and charts [for] showing whatever’s going on.

SP11: I can like sit down and draw a chart.

SP12: In algebra, [I use] bar graphs.

SP13: [I use] graphs and pictures [to display information]. I learned that in study skills.

SP14: Yeah [I use charts or graphs].

SP15: [In] math [I use graphing].

**Outlines: Student participants responded as follows:**

SP1: Well, I write the notes down.

SP3: I use …a list of things [to display information].

SP4: I may use some note cards… or something like that.
SP8: I try to make an outline most of the time.

SP12: I take notes.

SP14: Well for my presentations I use less words in order for key topics.

SP15: In English [I use outlines].

Various Methods: Student participants responded as follows:

SP6: I break it down and try to understand [it] step by step.

SP14: I usually use power point [to display information].

SP15: First, I look up the words in the dictionary. Then I try to break down … the main parts of the word. That way you won’t have to know the whole thing but just know the … main parts of it. That way it won’t be that difficult.

Memorization: Student participants responded as follows:

SP3: I use the techniques by just memorizing the first letter. One of the things they taught us was to relate things that you have to learn with things that you already know, so it’s easy to remember when you think about it.

SP11: I could do [display information] mentally.

Student Non-participants

The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into four themes: various methods, outlines, graphs, and memorization.

Various Methods: Student non-participants responded as follows:

NP1: [I’ll] put it in words that I do understand, like reword the whole.

NP3: [I’ll] probably use some kind of key or anything.

NP4: I break it down and get … other people to help me break it down.

NP5: Well, I just take the information and break it down as much as I can until I really understand it and then if I need help I get help.

NP6: Most of the time I break it down to where I can understand it if it’s difficult with the words. Most of the time I will write the information over.
NP7: I read it more than once. If you read ... more than once ... you'll usually get it. [I] can still ask a friend ... [to] help.

NP8: I ask a lot of questions: “How would you like me to show this information?” “This is hard to understand.”

NP9: Well, then I just take it slower and break it down so I can understand it better. I: How do you break it down?
NP9: Like trying to interpret it piece by piece instead of just reading it as a whole. I: Do you still use words or do you use other things when you break it down?
NP9: Yeah, I use words.

NP12: I go to tutoring ... if I don’t understand something real clearly. I go to tutoring the day before a test. If I have an essay due, I go to tutoring. They help me with that. I look up the information.

NP13: I read over it ... just over and over and over again until I read it slowly and then try and understand it, get it straight in my head, and then if I don’t understand it, I ask somebody about it.

NP14: I try to simplify it so I can understand [by] ... finding other words for it.

NP15: I’m a very visual person so I’ll either just write it out

Outlines: Student non-participants responded as follows:

NP1: I’ll outline the chapter.

NP2: [I display information] with note cards. I just write [the information] down.

NP3: I probably write it down.

NP8: Even just ... using clip notes as a guide [is a way to display information].

NP9: I use words [to display information].

NP12: I usually write out my information.

NP14: I try to simplify [the information] so I can understand. Finding other words [are other ways that I display information].

Graphs: Student non-participants responded as follows:

NP4: It’s easier for me to set ... charts.

NP10: When it’s difficult to understand with words I use pictures. I would just use
symbols and pictures.

NP13: Well, like in geometry I know I have to draw stuff … so I can kind of picture it.

NP15: Yes ma’am [in] … math [I use graphing].

Memorization: Student non-participants responded as follows:

NP1: I try to visualize it.

NP3: [I] just picture what they’re saying, you know, in [my] head.

Table 4.6g

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Graphs</th>
<th>Theme #2 Memorization</th>
<th>Theme #3 Outlines</th>
<th>Theme #4 Various Methods</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Participants</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Student Non-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 4.6h. What do students do to develop critical thinking skills?

Both student groups used logic skills, read, studied, and outlined information. Three out of the fifteen student participants focused on comprehending information to understand it. Two out of the fifteen student non-participants used test taking skills to practice critical thinking skills. Two out of the fifteen student participants didn’t know how to develop critical thinking skills as compared to three out of the fifteen student non-participants. See Table 4.6h for the frequency counts of factors that help students develop critical thinking skills. The student participants’ and student non-participants’ responses were as follows:
Student Participants

The student participants’ responses were categorized into six themes: use logic, study, outline information, read, comprehend information, and don’t know. Logic is delineated as rationalizing the information (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987). Comprehend information is delineated as making sense of the information (Devine, 1981).

Use Logic: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: I have to develop it along the way because I don’t really study critical thinking as much as I should. I use it sometimes in math. I’m not really that good at critical thinking though.

SP2: I may do critical thinking questions.

SP3: I don’t really like critical thinking. The only time I really do critical thinking is if our teacher assigns us a critical thinking … activity. Other than that, I’m not really that good at it.

SP5: Sometimes I’ll make my own word problems. Sometimes the word problems they give you [don’t have] … enough information. You have to think.

SP6: [I] brainstorm that’s all.

SP10: [I do] logic problems and math. We use to have a lot of word problems that use to help … us.

SP11: I use logical explanations.

SP12: I make up some questions for myself.

Study: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP3: I just go over the problem and just …brainstorm for a little while trying to see what I can get together and go from that. [I’ll] ask help from my mom. If it’s in class, [I’ll] probably ask another student.

SP5: I told [my godmother] I was having problems in math and stuff and she was like, well she gave me some extra worksheets and little books to work out of and she started making up word problems for me and then I just started doing it.
SP12: I practice what I learn.

SP13: By reviewing the material more than once [helped me develop critical thinking skills].

SP14: I use a lot of repetition [to develop critical thinking skills].

Outline Information: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP7: I know what I’m going to write … so I can understand it more.

SP8: [I try] to write but I … have trouble with critical thinking.

SP10: I use writing [to develop critical thinking skills].

Read: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP7: I like to read a lot [to develop critical thinking skills].

SP11: I learn from basically reading.

SP15: [I read] to develop critical thinking skills.

Comprehend Information: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP9: I listen to what other people say and I try to understand.

SP13: [I review the material until [I understand it.]

SP14: When you read you have a better understanding.

Don’t Know: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP4: I can’t think of anything [of how to develop critical thinking skills].

SP9: I don’t know.

Student Non-participants

The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into five themes: use logic, read, don’t know, learn how to take tests, and outline information. Logic is delineated as rationalizing the information (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987).
Comprehend information is delineated as making sense of the information (Devine, 1981).

Use Logic: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP3: I think about something that the average person wouldn’t think about. I probably think about hard topics or… a hard discussion … that the average person wouldn’t talk about. If someone asks me a difficult question, I’ll just think about it.

NP5: I have to really think about what I have to do.

NP7: With math you have to do a lot of critical thinking. Math is my favorite subject so I … just do it all the time. That prepares me for … [critical thinking].

NP8: I just go further. [I] try to investigate a little more.

NP9: Using things that you already know and applying it … [helps develop critical thinking skills].

NP10: I like to solve … word problems and do logic … puzzles [and] certain games. I have a game at home [that has] … different problems. It … makes you think. I use to like to play detective. I use to have detective books and quizzes.

NP12: Well a lot of my teachers really give us critical thinking questions on the test. When someone really makes you think … that help’s you … think more about a problem. In math you have to really do a lot of thinking. My teachers help me out in critical thinking.

NP13: Well in geometry I know our teacher would give us … these questions every week. It was like a scenario she would give us and you would have to figure out … how to answer the problems and explain it.

Read: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: I read books [to develop critical thinking skills].

NP4: I read a lot. Actually, I love reading.

NP5: To develop critical thinking skills I really read the question more than once.

NP9: [I] read the directions right [when solving critical thinking problems].

NP14: I just read a lot. I read magazines.

Don’t Know: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP6: I don’t know [how to develop critical thinking skills].
NP11: I don’t know how to answer that.

NP15: I don’t know [how to develop critical thinking skills].

Learn How to Take Tests: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: [I] take tests on the internet [to develop critical thinking skills].

NP13: [The teacher] was trying to prepare us for GEE. She wanted us to … explain everything. So, I guess that would be critical thinking skills, things that you really have to think about the answers.

Outline Information: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP8: [I] write the answer [after using critical thinking skills].

NP13: [The teacher] wanted us to write down and explain everything we did step by step.

Table 4.6h

Frequency Count of Factors That Help Students Develop Critical Thinking Skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Read</th>
<th>Theme #2 Use Logic</th>
<th>Theme #3 Learn How to Take Tests</th>
<th>Theme #4 Study</th>
<th>Theme #5 Outline Information</th>
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</tbody>
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Research Question 4.6.i. What do students do to comprehend information?

Student Participants

Both student groups read information, reviewed the information to develop understanding, asked questions, took notes, used logic, and created graphs to visualize the information. One out of fifteen student non-participants conducted research and two out of fifteen student non-participants listened attentively to comprehend the new
information. Logic is delineated as rationalizing the information (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987). Comprehend information is delineated as making sense of the information (Devine, 1981). See Table 4.6i for the frequency count of methods used to comprehend information. The student participants and student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

**Student Participants**

The student participants’ responses were categorized into six themes: read, ask questions, take notes, use logic, and display graphs. Logic is delineated as rationalizing the information (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987).

**Read:** The student participants responded as follows:

SP4: [I] read [information to comprehend it].

SP5: Sometimes you have to reread it, because … sometimes when you read, you’re just reading it to read [and] you’re not reading it for comprehension. So, you might have to reread it. That helps.

SP6: I read it the first time … and scan through it. The second time, I read it and try to comprehend it.

SP7: I read something and if I really don’t understand it, I’ll … read it a couple more times. I’ll read it again and then pull my own conclusions out of it.

SP8: I kind of just read it over and over again [and] try to break it down into simpler terms.

SP9: I read it more than once.

SP11: [I] read over the information.

SP12: I read the book.

SP13: [I] reread it and [I] find the answer to the results.

SP14: [I do] a lot of reading.

SP15: [I] read [and I] read again.
Ask Questions: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP2: I ask questions in my mind and make sure I’m understanding.

SP3: I ask the teacher to help me break it down and … she’s been pretty helpful with it.

SP4: I’ll ask somebody.

SP7: Sometimes I’ll ask other people … what they think it is.

SP8: [I’ll] just ask somebody.

SP12: [I’ll] ask the teacher questions.

Review: The student participants responded as follows:

SP1: I review [the information] in my head.

SP3: I’ll just go over [the information].

SP4: [I] read [the information] over and over if I don’t understand.

SP13: You go back and reread [the information to comprehend it].

SP14: [I do] a lot of … repetition.

Take Notes: The students’ responses were as follows:

SP10: [I] take notes about [the information to comprehend it].

SP12: I take notes [to comprehend information].

SP13: You write down what you don’t understand [to comprehend information].

Use Logic: The student participants responded as follows:

SP2: [I] try to make myself understand.

SP7: [I’ll] pull my own conclusions about it.

SP9: I think about what the person … says slowly. I try to break it up in parts and understand it right then, and then I try to relate it to other stuff.

I: Relate it to other stuff?
SP9: [I] try to connect it with stuff that I already know.
Display Graphs: A student participant responded as follows:

SP10: [I display information with an] outline.

Student Non-participants

The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into eight themes: read, review, take notes, ask questions, listen, research, use logic, and display graphs.

Read: The student non-participants responded as follows:

NP3: We’re reading books that we do not like and we don’t understand so a lot of times you have to deal with most books.

NP5: [I] just read over it more than once and talk to myself so I understand.

NP6: I read [it] over and over ... again until I understand.

NP7: [I] do a lot of reading. Reading helps you to comprehend a lot.

NP8: If I have information that I don’t really understand, I try to read it over again [to] ... get a better understanding.

NP10: [I] read.

NP11: I normally read it and read it and read it and read it.

NP13: I read over [the information] again.

Review: The student non-participants responded as follows:

NP1: I go over [the information to comprehend it].

NP2: [I ] just keep reviewing.

NP3: I go over [the information] over and over again.

NP12: I go back over [the information].


Take Notes: The student non-participants responded as follows:

NP2: [I] write notes [and] retake notes.
NP12: I write [the information] down.

NP14: [I] write it down and that helps me understand it.

NP15: I guess that I normally write it out to digest [information].

Ask Questions: The student non-participants responded as follows:

NP8: If I don’t understand I’ll ask a question,

NP9: To comprehend information … if I don’t understand, I ask questions.

NP11: I just … ask someone.

Listen: The student non-participants responded as follows:

NP9: I listen [when I comprehend information].

NP13: I listen in class [to comprehend information].

Research: A student non-participant responded as follows:

NP9: If I don’t understand, …I’ll look it up myself.

Use Logic: A student non-participant responded as follows:

NP1: I go over [information] … until I understand it.

Display Graphs: A student non-participant responded as follows:

NP3: I know with a lot of books like Jane Eyre, I don’t really like it but I have to picture what’s she going through in my head so that’s how I comprehend most of the information I read.

Research Question 4.6.j. How do students prepare for reports and writing assignments?

The student participants’ and student non-participants’ responses were categorized into six themes: research, outline, manage time, ask questions, review, and read. See Table 4.6j for frequency count of methods used for preparing reports and writing.
### Table 4.6i

**Frequency Count of Methods used to Comprehend Information.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Take Notes</th>
<th>Theme #2 Review</th>
<th>Theme #3 Read</th>
<th>Theme #4 Ask Questions</th>
<th>Theme #5 Research</th>
<th>Theme #6 Listen</th>
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</table>

**Student Participants**

The student participants’ responses were as follows:

Research: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP2:  I usually go on the internet and look up the subject.

SP4: [I use the] encyclopedia [and] different …books [from] the library. [I use] the internet sometimes.

SP5: [I ] get all [my] research first and start going through [my] research and then put it together [to prepare for reports and writing].

SP7: [I get information to write reports and writing assignments from [books from the library].

SP8: [I] get information for my assignments mostly [from] the internet or encyclopedias.

SP9: I go to a website, … [or] web search … and start collecting information [to prepare for reports and writing assignments.

SP11: I go to the library. I do my research and I put all of this together. That’s how I prepare.

SP13: Well with the topic that you’re assigned to do your research paper, you gather information about it.

SP14: I use the internet mostly [to find information].
SP15: [I use] the internet, encyclopedias, [and] library book[s].

Outline: The student participants’ responded as follows:

SP2: I put [the report] in my own words.

SP4: Sometimes I make an outline of whatever I want … the paper to be about.

SP6: [I] outline information.

SP7: I’ll jot down notes on how I’m going to organize my report.

SP10: Well, I always outline and I make sure I have what I’m talking about on whatever the topic is.

SP12: I prewrite and then I do my work. Then I do my report.

SP13: [I] write [the information] down in an outline form and [I] take notes about it.

SP14: I usually do a lot of rough drafts before writing an assignment.

SP15: First, I have to outline the work, pick out the main point, find any sources that are about the main point, and from there just write up the research paper from all the main points.

Manage Time: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP3: Usually with reports and writing assignments, I … procrastinate. If I start early, I seem to do worse than if I do it [at the] last minute because I’m forced to do it. Two to three days before it’s due, I … start getting it together because if I don’t, maybe I’m not going to do too well.

SP5: Don’t do it the day before it’s due and you have to go to the library and get all your research so you don’t have to do the whole thing every day. Get all your research first and then start going through your research and then put it together.

SP9: I try to start on time. I try to get myself prepared mentally. Other times I procrastinate but I start to gather my information. I do a lot of it on my computer so I save a lot of it. I go to a website [and] go to web search …and start collecting information. Then when the report is almost due I get the information and I do my report.

Ask Questions: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP2: I’ll ask my friends and my mom to help me.
SP11: If I don’t understand something, I will ask my teacher.

SP12: My teacher is helpful. She will answer questions that I ask her.

Review: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: [I] get familiar with what I’ve written in the report.

SP7: I’ll go back …and take …some quotes … and put it all together.

Read: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: I read what I have on paper [when I prepare for reports and writing assignments].

SP7: I read the information that I’m going to have to remember for the report.

Student Non-participants

Research: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: I use the internet … for reports.

NP2: [I] … check different books out of the library [and use] the internet.

NP3: If it’s something I’m research from way back then I’ll probably go to the library and use the books and encyclopedias and … files but I really like the internet for preparing for reports.

NP4: [I] gather as much information as I can.

NP8: I would go on the internet [to] check out …. some other aspects of that piece of writing. We had to do our term papers on novels so I went on the internet and looked at [the] analyses of the different …. novel[s]. I do use [the school’s] library. I do use the [parish’s] library.

NP9: [I conduct] research in the library.

Outline: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: I make an outline [when] I write … reports.

NP3: I’ll pretty much just … take my notes [and] get all the information I need.

NP5: I get as many notes as possible and I put them altogether. Then I’ll do my report and writing assignments.
NP6: I usually write out … an outline. I elaborate on those subjects.

NP7: I prepare a couple of weeks in advance [by] …writing a paragraph … each night. That helps. The introduction I find is the hardest part of an essay to write. So I work on my introduction for maybe a week or so …. in advanced. That’s how I prepare for writing assignments.

NP8: [I] do an outline [when I prepare for reports and writing assignments].

NP11: If I have a writing assignment a week from now, I’ll … write notes down. Two or three days before the assignment is due, I start writing [and] putting everything together.

NP12: We do outlines [for] some reports.

NP13: First I take notes on [what’s it] … really … going to be about.

NP14: [I'll] jot down notes after [I find] … what I’m looking for.

NP15: I normally … make an outline of what I want to do [when I prepare for reports and writing assignments].

Manage Time: A student non-participant’ response was as follows:

NP10: I try not to wait until the last minute because that’s …nerve-racking. I try to pace myself.

Ask Questions: Student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP9: [I get] other people’s opinions. [I ask] my teachers.

NP10: When I come across something that I don’t know … I ask the teacher.

NP11: My dad will check [my work] to make sure everything’s right.

NP12: My English teacher … tutors on Tuesdays. She would help us out with our reports and writing [assignments]. If something’s wrong, she’ll grade them.

NP13: [I] make sure the teacher approves it.

NP15: I normally get my mom and my dad to read it and make sure it’s OK.

Review: A student non-participant’ response was as follows:

NP15: I do a rough draft and then revise it.
Read: Student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP10: Usually when I have essays, [I gather] any material that I can read.

NP13: I get my information and put it all together and … proofread it.

Table 4.6j

Frequency Count of Methods Used for Preparing Reports and Writing

Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Theme #1 Research</th>
<th>Theme #2 Read</th>
<th>Theme #3 Outline</th>
<th>Theme #4 Manage Time</th>
<th>Theme #5 Review</th>
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</table>

Research Question 7. Was the study skills course effective?

This question was asked to student participants, student non-participants, teachers, and administrators. All of the student participants, eight out of fifteen student non-participants, and three out of five teachers reported that the study skills course was effective. All three administrators perceived the study skills course to be ineffective.

Student Participants

The student participants’ responses were categorized into two themes: recommended and not recommended. See Table 4.7 for the frequency count of recommendations to take the study skills course. All of the student participants recommended other students to take the study skills course. Their responses were as follows:

Recommended: The student participants’ responses were as follows:

SP1: Yes, [I recommend other students to take the study skills course] because
sometimes you may get …disorganized and this is the way to get organized with your notes. You may not have any strategies for taking tests and this is a good way to develop those strategies.

SP2: Yeah, if [students are] … not doing good in studying, I would recommend it. They won’t make it through high school without knowing how to study.

SP3: Yes, [I would recommend other students to take the study skills course because it helps you to be able to … get better … at a school that [gives you] … a lot of homework. It helps you as far as learning how to do things and how to take information and learn it and comprehend it.

SP4: If you don’t have good study habits, it really does help if you take the class

SP5: I think it should be a mandatory class for ninth graders because it really helps you. It teaches you, because middle school and high school is totally different. Teachers [in high school] … don’t take late work as much and they don’t like excuses.

SP6: Yes ma’am, [I would recommend other students to take the study skills course] because it really helps. [I] underline better. [I’m] able to listen better.
I: Does it help your grades also?  
SP6: Yes, ma’am.

SP7: If they need help studying, then I would probably recommend it.

SP8: Yes [I would recommend other students to take the study skills course because] it’s not a class where you have to be stressed out. The biggest thing that I got was …if you needed time to work before school you got to do that. You got to pick up some study skills things on the way.

SP10: Yes [I would recommend other students to take the study skills course] because I think every student should know how to be able to put out their stress and just manage their time better and be able to study so that they can get better grades instead of having to rush at the last minute because I know a lot of students do that.

SP11: I really would [recommend other students to take the study skills course] because … when you come to high school you could be stressed. I demand everybody [to] take it because it can help you a lot. [You can learn] studying [techniques]. You can highlight the most important things and you’ll know exactly what you need to know.

SP12: It’ll help you learn more about your study skills and it’ll help you know more things like proofreading and …outlining a chapter.
SP13: Yes ma’am [I would recommend other students to take the study skills course] because … in study skills you learn how to interpret the chapter, make outlines by the notes and you understand better.

SP14: I would [recommend other students to take the study skills course] because it helps you in your studies.

SP15: Yes ma’am I would recommend other students to take the study skills course if students feel that they don’t really have a good understanding of things. They need to take it. It’s very good.

Student Non-participants

The student non-participants’ responses were categorized into two themes:

Recommended and not recommended.

Recommended: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP2: Yes I would [recommend other students to take the study skills course] … even though I haven’t taken it because I’m sure it would help even more with their studying. Maybe they get some tips on how to study with note cards.
I: Do you think if you had taken the study skills course it may have helped you?
NP2: Probably [it would] help me out a lot.
I: What areas do you need help in?
NP2: [I need help] in [learning] …. studying [techniques] … for different classes [and] … in case I … run into something I don’t understand. It might have helped.

NP3: Yes, I would [recommend other students to take the study skills course]. I think it’s not too many kids [that] come over here with pretty good study skills. The kids that do have study skills they have to probably change them because of the schedule. We have only five classes a day. Some people who come from middle school might be use to taking seven classes a day. You have to change your study skills just because of that little schedule.

NP5: Well if they’re at [this dedicated academic magnet high school] … I would because it seems like it would help tremendously. It would help [students] … understand how to study and how to comprehend better and they would make better grades.

NP7: Yes, although I haven’t taken the study skills course I kind of think that it would be a good course to take especially going to this school. I think I would recommend people to take it. A lot of people don’t really have good study skills. I just really learned how to study. When I first came to this school as a freshman, I really didn’t know how to study. I … still made good grades but it was really hard for me and it was really stressful. So, I figured that the course would
probably help out a lot and take some of the stress off.

NP9: Yes [I would recommend other students to take the study skills course]. It could help.

NP10: I would recommend other students to take the study skills course because it would probably help improve their study skills habits. In order to succeed at this school you need to know how to study or review to help you with your grades. Even if it doesn’t help a lot, it should help a little bit. You should learn methods … that might help [you] later on in studying.

NP13: If … a person …doesn’t really know how to study or doesn’t know how to … go through things and make themselves understand then it would probably would be a good thing [to take the study skills course].

NP14: If you’re not studying, I’d recommend it.

Not Recommended: The student non-participants’ responses were as follows:

NP1: I never took the class [so I won’t make a recommendation].

NP4: I never took it so I wouldn’t know.

NP6: I didn’t take that course. I will not make any recommendations.

NP8: I didn’t take it. I won’t make a recommendation.

NP11: I didn’t take it. I won’t make a recommendation about a course that I didn’t take.

NP12: I didn’t take it. I will not make a recommendation.

NP15: I don’t know.

Teachers

The teachers’ responses were categorized into two themes: recommended and not recommended.

Recommended: The teachers’ responses were as follows:

T1: It can be …[more] effective but you know honestly I think that the study skills should be a part of the freshman English class. I think that the first six weeks of the freshman English should be study skills because what happens is when you got a whole semester of study skills. Once you do the time management, once you do the test taking, then you find yourself not doing things different from that. You’re just trying to come up with ways of reinforcing those …five or six basic things that they
need to know. So I think that it would be more effective if it was taught as a part of the English class.

T2: I think it’s effective for all students. I think if students … test scores indicate that they might be borderline [they] … need a cheerleader. They need someone to show them how to do a planner. When they’ve achieved in the class or they’ve set goals in the class … they [need to] have somebody … congratulate them.

T3: It is effective. But I think that it should be for all racial groups. The only way I think it could become more effective is if [students] … decide to take it. As far … just being [an] elective [that’s] … thrown in because of schedule problems or because their parents tell them to take it, [students] … come in with this shield up … or they come in thinking I know everything about study skills and I don’t need to learn anything. So it takes a good week or two to break that and then eventually they start realizing they do not know everything and that [the study skills course] … will help them. So overall I will say yes it is effective for African American students.

Not Recommended: The teachers’ responses were as follows:

T4: It would if it could be compressed into … maybe a nine week course as opposed to a whole semester course. I think a semester is too long. A nine week course to get them started on the right path … would work. It really could have been compressed into a lot less time because we ended up having what one day a week as a study hall where I would have some people come in and try to help them with math tutoring because I couldn’t help them with that. It really dragged on a little bit too long. [The students] really got tired of … [the material].

T5: I do not think that the course should be offered here just because of the magnet program. We have to push our kids so much harder and we’re expected to. I think that the study skills course baby’s them in a way that if they wouldn’t have taken it I think that they would have achieved the same success.

Administrators

The administrators’ responses were categorized into one theme: not recommended.

Not Recommended: The administrators’ responses were as follows:

A1: Well, I’m going to say it would have been [effective] if it had been taught the way that it should have been. In the past it was not effective because the kids were not getting what they needed in that setting and based on the way it was taught it was non-effective. It could have been … if the right teacher had it and that teacher had all of the strategies that would have been needed to effectively work with the kids. It wasn’t set up that way.
A2: No, I don’t think it’s been effective. It wasn’t just African American students in there. There were other students. The reason I’m saying that is because of the two things that you have to have. You have to have the teacher who thinks it’s important, doesn’t think that it is a course [that’s been] dumped on them, and think they’re making a difference, and that the students are accepting it, and think that it’s going to make a difference. Since I’ve been here, I have not experienced that with the teachers that have taught it and also the students. I don’t think it’s been successful. That’s one of the reasons that it’s not being offered right now. What we have taken a look at is to do this in the academy to begin with before our freshmen come and also using our English teachers to try to spend a two or three week unit at the very beginning. All English I teachers … [will teach] … study skills so that all children get it and … all understand the importance of it. I think that would end up being more successful.

Administrator 3 was not at the school when the course was offered. She speaks about the future.

A3: I believe that if we could raise those ninth graders skills in reading next year that we’re going to see an increase in all levels. We have some kids who’ve never read a book all the way through because the middle schools just for some reason, …[didn’t] find that important. This would be something that would be tied in with the “Dynamics” class. It may not help with a specific class but it’s going to help overall with a child’s achievement.

She was asked: Should the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” remain in the curriculum? Why? Why not? Her response was:

A3: Well, it just depends. Unfortunately, it depends on manpower. It depends on can you afford to have a teacher teaching that. Now-a-days in our parish it’s gotten to where every hour is so important for just your core classes. We don’t have frivolous things anymore. What other people call frivolous and unfortunately it might be that “Dynamics”[course] would be considered …if you’re looking for core teachers. I think that it has to be something that the principal makes important. It has to start with the principal and the principal has to make it important. And make sure that it is a valued class because if you don’t then it will fall off of the curriculum and it will be hard to get it back.

I: Would you suggest that the course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” stay in the curriculum?

A3: If I can afford it I would. This whole idea that I have about reading is something I feel very strongly about and if I could tie that to “Dynamics” as well as math then I think that it would be good. Right now … if I had a perfect school … where I could do anything, I think every child should be in “Dynamics of Effective Study.”
Every child can learn better. But I don’t live in an ideal world. I live in a very realistic world that it’s hard sometimes to make those decisions. When I was at [another high school] as assistant principal we had “Dynamics of Effective Study.” But due to the number of classes that we had to have and the cuts that were made by the school board we had to let go of that. There are schools … that are inner city that still have that course but they get the extra funding. They get Title I money that helps them to fund for a teacher where I don’t get that extra money. So, you’ve asked me a question that’s hard to answer because as a principal I want to have it.

Table 4.7

**Frequency Count of Recommendations to Take the Study Skills Course**

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<th>Group</th>
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**Summary**

Open-ended research questions were asked to student participants, student non-participants, former study skills teachers, and administrators about their perceptions of the effectiveness of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study.” Their responses are summarized below.

**Research Question 1: What influenced African American students to take the study skills course?**

Only two of the fifteen African American students reported that they willingly chose to take the study skills course. The other thirteen students along with the teachers and administrators perceived that African American students took the course to fulfill a
course requirement or were influenced by their parents, teachers, guidance counselor, or the admissions officer to take the course. The course was not perceived by the majority of the students, teachers and the administrators as a course that was readily accepted or wanted by the students.

Research Question 2: What specific strategies did African American students learn from the study skills course?

The students indicated that they perceived to have learned six of the eleven knowledge acquisition study skills of the course as noted in chapters one and two. These skills were note-taking skills, time management skills, test taking skills, listening skills, study techniques, and outlining skills. Reading was indicated as one of the study skills learned even though reading was not one of the knowledge acquisition study skills of the course.

Research Question 3: How has the study skills course affected the students’ academic achievement?

The majority of the students had a positive experience from the study skills course. Many of them indicated that their GPA improved. The former study skills teachers also shared those perceptions with the students. The teachers indicated that the course either helped the students meet or exceed the school’s GPA requirement. On the other hand, two of the administrators who had been at the school when the study skills course was implemented did not readily agree that the course was solely responsible for the enhancement of the students’ GPA. They indicated that they did not know how the course impacted the students’ achievement levels. The administrator who had been recently assigned to this school reported that the study skills course helped students meet the GPA criterion. She was not however, at the school when the course was taught.
Research Question 4: What factors have been obstacles to students’ success?

Student participants and student non-participants seemed to have been overwhelmed with the amount of work that was required of them at this dedicated academic magnet school. They, along with one of the teachers, indicated that friends, adjusting to high school, and extracurricular activities became distractions that interfered with their school work. Both groups had trouble with comprehension skills based on their responses from the interviews.

The student participants stated that they particularly had trouble managing their time so that they could be successful in school. Lack of note-taking skills and listening skills were less problematic for them. Time management, note-taking, and test taking skills were factors that impeded the non-participants’ success.

Teachers and administrators believed based on their responses that African American students did not have a strong support system and were not motivated to achieve. The teachers believed based on their responses that the students’ culture and interests weren’t acknowledged and the administrators believed that non-parental support, low entrance achievement levels, lack of resources for education, and lack of study skills impeded the academic achievement of these students.

Research Question 5: What factors have contributed to students’ success?

Student participants, student non-participants, and one administrator cited studying as a factor that enhanced students’ academic achievement. The student non-participants relied heavily on their parents and friends to help them succeed in school whereas student participants relied on themselves to meet the school’s GPA criterion.
The teachers and administrators indicated that the cultural diversity in this school as compared to other schools, a strong support system from parents and teachers, having a sense of belonging, and commitment to succeeding were factors that positively impacted African American academic achievement.

Research Question 6: What study skills are used by students?

To specifically answer research question 6, ten sub-level questions were asked to student participants and student non-participants.

Research Question 6a: How do students prepare for quizzes and tests?

Studying was a major factor used by student participants and student non-participants to prepare for quizzes and tests. They also used notes and listening skills to prepare for these activities. One student non-participant even prayed to help her succeed.

Research Question 6b: What do students do in classes in which the teacher lectures?

Student participants and student non-participants relied heavily on note-taking skills in lecture classes. Listening, memorizing the lecture, and asking questions were also skills students used in lecture classes.

Research Question 6c: What processes do students use in learning new information?

Student participants and student non-participants perceived to have relied more on studying than taking notes and using critical thinking and listening skills to learn new information.

Research Question 6d: What are the students’ weekly activities for preparing for school including the weekend?

The student participants and student non-participants studied and completed homework assignments to prepare for school. Only student participants indicated that they used time management and library skills to complete their weekly activities.
Research Question 6e: What processes do students use for studying including the amount of time they study weekly?

Both student groups spent most of their time completing homework assignments during the week. Student participants used tutoring and time management skills to aid them in studying. Student non-participants used listening skills during class time, time management skills, and motivation to help them keep up with the weekly workload from school.

Research Question 6f: What do students do when they are introduced to unfamiliar concepts?

Both student groups relied on using critical thinking skills, reading skills, and listening skills to learn unfamiliar concepts. The student participants used the library to find more information about these concepts and the student non-participants took notes to help them grasp these ideas. Both groups received external help by receiving tutorial services.

Research Question 6g: How do students display information that has lots of information or is difficult to understand with words?

Students who were in the study skills course indicated that they had been taught graphing skills and were able to address this question. Students who had not taken or completed the study skills course used other methods to respond to this activity. As indicated by some students, graphing was used only if it was requested.

Research Question 6h: What do students do to develop critical thinking skills?

Some student participants and some student non-participants indicated that they didn’t know what to do to develop critical thinking skills. Comprehension skills were used only by student participants. Test taking skills were only used by student non-participants to
develop critical thinking skills. Both student groups reported that they used logic, studied, outlined information, and read to develop critical thinking skills.

**Research Question 6i: What do students do to comprehend information?**

Both student groups took notes, reviewed, read, asked questions, used logic and displayed graphs to comprehend information. Only the student non-participants conducted research and listened to comprehend information.

**Research Question 6j: How do students prepare for reports and writing assignments?**

Student participants and student non-participants used the same skills for preparing for reports and writing assignments. They conducted research, read, outlined, used time management skills, reviewed, and asked questions.

**Research Question 7: Was the study skills course effective?**

All of the student participants reported that the course was effective because they learned test taking strategies, time management skills, note-taking skills, “how to study” skills, listening skills, outlining skills, reading skills, comprehension skills or improved their GPA. Most of the students indicated by their responses that they believed the course helped them learn how to study to manage the workload.

Even though the student non-participants did not take or complete the study skills course, eight out of fifteen recommended other students to take the study skills course so that students could learn note-taking skills, study techniques, comprehension skills, time management skills, and improve their GPA.

Three out of five teachers perceived the course to be effective because students perceived that they learned time management skills and test taking skills. The teachers indicated that students could learn study skills that could help them excel in school and .
they could motivate students to succeed.

However, one teacher indicated that the course was too long and lost its effectiveness with the students. The students became bored with the skills that were taught. Another teacher stated that a dedicated academic magnet school should not offer a study skills course because students should know how to excel when they attend this type of school.

All three administrators indicated that the study skills course was not effective because of the way it was implemented in the curriculum. Other reasons included ineffective teaching styles, enrolled students did not willingly take the course, and teachers did not willingly accept teaching the course.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the students, teachers, and administrators of the effectiveness of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study.” The specific research question addressed was as follows: Are there differences in the students’, teachers’, and administrators’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the “Dynamics of Effective Study” course? If so, what are they? Why do they exist? If differences occurred, they were to be identified as to why they existed.

Seven sub-level questions were also asked to get in-depth information about the perception of effectiveness of specific study skills. Those questions were:

1. What influenced African American students to take the study skills course?

2. What specific strategies did African American students learn from the study skills course?

3. How has the study skills course affected the students’ academic achievement?

4. What factors have been obstacles to students’ success?

5. What factors have contributed to students’ success?

6. What study skills are used by students?
   a) How do students prepare for quizzes and tests?
   b) What do students do in classes in which the teacher lectures?
   c) What processes do students use in learning new information?
   d) What are the students’ weekly activities for preparing for school, including the weekend?
e) What processes do students use for studying, including the amount of time they study weekly?

f) What do students do when they are introduced to unfamiliar concepts?

g) How do students display information has lots of information or is difficult to understand with words?

h) What do students do to develop critical thinking skills?

i) What do students do to comprehend information?

j) How do students prepare for reports and writing assignments?

7. Was the study skills course effective?

Fifteen African American students (student participants) who completed the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” fifteen African American students (student non-participants) who did not take or complete the study skills course, five former study skills teachers, and three administrators participated in the study. All of the student interviewees had attended or were attending a dedicated academic magnet high school when the research was being conducted. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with each participant. They were conducted on the dedicated academic magnet high school’s campus, two other high school campuses in southeast Louisiana and at one of the student’s homes. The student sample was purposefully stratified to investigate students with entry GPAs from 2.5 to 3.0 and above 3.0. The teacher participants were selected because they had taught the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” during the years 1995 through 2002. All of the administrators included in the study were currently employed at the dedicated academic magnet high school.
The results of the study indicated that all fifteen of the student participants, eight of the fifteen student non-participants, and three of the five teachers recommended students to enroll in the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study.” All three administrators perceived that the course was ineffective because of the way it was implemented in the curriculum. They cited ineffective teaching styles, enrolled students did not willingly take the course, and that teachers did not willingly accept teaching the course. Four overall themes emerged from this study: “Receivers”, “It Was Good But Not Good Enough For Me”, “Believers”, and “Prove It.”

**Student Participants - “Receivers”**

Regardless of their participation in the study skills course, “high expectations” were the norm for African American students at this dedicated academic magnet high school. African American students were considered “smart” and expected to do well in school. This learning environment contradicts the findings of Fordham & Ogbo (1986) and Ford (1996) who contend that African American students choose to underachieve to “fit in” culturally with other African Americans. African American students at this school are focused on achieving to meet or surpass the challenge of maintaining the 2.5 GPA requirement. The student participants chose a self-regulatory activity, the study skills course, to enhance their academic achievement in this educational setting. All of the students reported benefiting from participating in this study skills course. The students who volunteered to enroll in the course reported that their GPA and test taking skills improved. This finding supports the research of Entwistle (1960) who contends that students can enhance their academic achievement levels if they volunteer to enroll in a study skills course.
The student participants reported that they received several benefits from this course. The first benefit they received was successfully completing the course. Ten of the student participants reported that they perceived the study skills course as helping them improve their GPA. SP2 stated, “I’m starting to get better grades,” and SP10 was satisfied with her grades after enrolling in the course. She stated, “If I wouldn’t have taken that class last year, I probably would have had worse grades than I did.” SP7 tells us, “I know how to study better.” The combination of implementing study skills with motivation has helped these students meet their goals of remaining at this challenging academic high school. These findings are supported by the research of Haynes (1993) who contends that students who engage in the behavioral perspective of study skills and are impacted by external conditions can succeed when their teachers, peers, friends, and family encourage them to succeed. From their interviews the students indicated that they were motivated by their parents, friends, peers, teachers, counselors, and the admissions officer to succeed in this learning environment. Some even participated in external or internal tutorial services to assure their academic success. As compared to the student non-participant group, the student participants reported that they relied less on others to succeed than the student non-participants.

All of the student participants had specific goals. Students enrolled to meet the elective requirement, some pleased their parents and complied with school recommendations, two willingly enrolled in the course, and several indicated that they needed study skills. The National Commission of Excellence (1983) suggests that students enroll in study skills during high school. Study skills should be offered throughout the student’s educational experience. Another year of study skills could
possibly enhance time management skills for seven of these students who reported that
time management was problematic for them.

The student participants’ self-reported study habits as discussed in chapter four were
above average for African American students. This study behavior contradicts the
findings of Kunjufu (1988), who contends that African American students study less than
white and Asian students.

These students reported that they applied all eleven knowledge acquisition study skills
from the study skills course and implemented other skills as reported from their responses
to questions 1-7 in chapter four. They believed that they had all of the right ingredients
to succeed. They were above average students, had family support, learned study skills
from a structured study skills course, were motivated by teachers, friends, and peers, and
had goals to enter college. The student participants’ success in the study skills course
influenced them to recommend other students to take the course. All fifteen of the
student participants recommended other students to take the course. SP4 tells us, “If you
don’t have good study habits, it really does help if you take the class.” SP5 strongly
supports the study skills course. She stated:

    I think it should be a mandatory class for ninth graders because it really helps
    you. It teaches you, because middle school and high school is totally different.
    Teachers [in high school] … don’t take late work as much and they don’t like
    excuses.

Student Non-Participants – “It Was Good But Not Good Enough For Me”

Fifteen African American students who had not taken or completed the study skills
course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” participated in this study. These students
indicated that a study skills course could have enhanced their skills and helped them
achieve without the trial and error of finding the best methods to apply study skills to
learning tasks. These, too, are “smart” African American students. They are goal oriented and committed to succeeding. The student non-participants were also supported by their parents, friends, and teachers to succeed at this dedicated academic magnet high school. As indicated by Rafoth, Leal, & DeFabo (1993), these independent learners are successful because they believe they can succeed.

Even though these students had not taken or completed the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” eight of the fifteen student non-participants recommended other students to take the study skills course to learn effective note-taking skills, comprehension skills, time management skills, “learn how to study”, and to improve their GPA. The remaining seven student non-participants chose not to make recommendations because they had not taken the course. Student non-participant 10 sums up the effects a study skills course can have on high school students.

I would recommend other students to take the study skills course because it would probably help improve their study skills habits. In order to succeed at this school you need to know how to study or review to help you with your grades. Even if it doesn’t help a lot, it should help a little bit. You should learn methods … that might help [you] later on in studying.

Teachers – “Believers”

Three out of five former study skills teachers recommended that the course remain in the curriculum. Their perceived responses indicated that the study skills course enhanced students’ study skills and GPA. Applied study skills would not only enhance learning but also enable students to remain at this dedicated academic magnet school when the GPA criterion is met. For these reasons, they recommended that the course remain in the curriculum.

Two teachers did not perceive the course to be effective as it had been implemented in
the curriculum. They did not perceive the course as an effective course for African American students. Their findings were similar to a study conducted by Tabberer (1993). Tabberer (1993) found that all study skills courses do not enhance the academic achievement of students. There are many factors that can impede its effectiveness. In this school setting, it is perceived that resources were not available for the implementation of the course and teachers were not trained to teach it. T4 shared her frustration about the course.

It would if it could be compressed into … maybe a nine-week course as opposed to a whole semester course. I think a semester is too long. A nine-week course to get them started on the right path … would work. It really could have been compressed into a lot less time because we ended up having … one day a week as a study hall where I would have some people come in and try to help them with math tutoring because I couldn’t help them with that. It really dragged on a little bit too long. [The students] really got tired of … [the material].

Another teacher has a different perspective. T1 remembers how some of the students that she had taught in the study skills class excelled at this dedicated academic magnet high school.

I can remember five of them that graduated from [the dedicated academic magnet high school]. That’s not to say that the others didn’t but I can remember five of them graduated in the top 10% of their class.

Administrators - “Prove It”

All three administrators indicated that the study skills course was not effective by the way it was implemented in the curriculum. They indicated that ineffective teaching styles, unwilling students in the course, and reluctant teachers to teach the course impacted the effectiveness of the course. Banks, McQuater, & Sonne (1995) and Hale (2001) argue that multimodal and multimedia teaching strategies can enhance the
academic achievement of African American students. An investigation of varied teaching styles may provide more learning opportunities for these students.

Conclusions

This dedicated academic magnet high school has been under a court order to enroll a 50% African American student body and a 50% non-African American student body since the development of the school in 1976. Currently the enrollment is 47% African American and 53% non-African American. Several programs have been implemented to increase and maintain the enrollment of the African American students. The study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” was implemented in the curriculum of this dedicated academic magnet high school to enhance the academic achievement of and retain African American students. From this qualitative study, it has been found that there were differences in the perceptions of the students, teachers, and administrators of the effectiveness of the study skills course. An examination of why those differences existed revealed that each group perceived the effectiveness of the course differently (explained in the summaries of chapter four and chapter five), which provides educators with implications for practitioners and research.

Several interesting findings emerged which are integrated into implications for research below. One is that student participants and student non-participants indicated that they used reading and comprehension skills to solve certain learning tasks. Neither of these skills were objectives of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” (Louisiana Department of Education, 1987). However, if students are using these skills and indicate a need to implement these skills then further investigation should be
conducted to determine whether these skills could or do enhance the academic achievement of these students.

Another finding that emerged from this study was that several of the teachers and administrators indicated that the study skills course was lengthy. One teacher reported that the class was “boring” because the objectives had been met before the semester ended.

A third finding addresses reading. Because African American students lag behind white students in reading by two or more years by sixth grade (Lomotey, 1990), reading could be implemented in the study skills curriculum to enhance the academic achievement of African American students. According to the entrance reading stanine scores listed in Appendix F and Appendix G, only two African American students from each student group had reading stanine scores above 6. The other thirteen African American students had reading stanine scores of 5 and 6. Enhancing the reading scores of African American students may have an impact on enhancing their academic achievement as was found in a similar study by French (1986).

A fourth finding was that the student participants perceived to have relied more heavily on study skills to succeed in school than the student non-participants as indicated from their responses in Table 4.5. The student non-participants perceived to have relied more on external factors. These students indicated in their responses that they received motivation from parents, tutors, friends, teachers, and peers to help them succeed. Further investigation of the impact of motivation on student achievement should be conducted.
In research question 4, 7 out of 15 student participants indicated that they lacked time management skills to succeed at the dedicated academic magnet high school. Only one out of fifteen student participants perceived time management skills as a tool to complete school assignments and participate in school and home extracurricular activities. An examination of the implementation of this study skill may provide insight into how this skill could aid students in completing their tasks.

A sixth finding was that logic and critical thinking skills were seldom reported from both student groups as skills used to complete assignments, as indicated from their responses to questions 1-7. Mastery of these skills could enhance the academic achievement of African American students.

Implications for Future Research

This study was intended to examine the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators of the effectiveness of a study skills course on the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school. More research is needed to provide insight into this intervention. Future research can be conducted as follows:

1. A longitudinal study would provide a more in-depth investigation of the population to determine retention and graduation rates of students that completed the study skills course.

2. Duplicate the present study with a larger sample in a similar setting to provide a broader generalizability of the findings.

3. Future investigations should examine gender differences (Adams & Singh, 1998). They could add to our knowledge base if gender was investigated.
4. Comparative studies which include academically successful and non-academically successful African American students may provide better insight to identify effective methods for teaching study skills.

5. Further examination could be explored to determine why the student non-participants did not choose to enroll in the study skills course. These findings can give more insight into the perceptions of the effectiveness of a study skills course from students who do not take study skills courses.

There is a great need for research on the perceptions of effects of a study skills course on the academic achievement of African American students at dedicated academic magnet high schools. In this study, I have attempted to contribute to the literature supporting the perceived effectiveness of study skills courses on the academic achievement of African American students. This study has been successful in that perceived differences have been found among students, teachers, and administrators of the effectiveness of a study skills course on the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school.

Implications for Practitioners

Administrators, teachers, and students of the dedicated academic magnet high school along with other administrators, teachers, and students in similar settings can use the findings from this study.

Administrators can use this study to determine whether they want to implement a study skills course in their curricula and if so, determine how they would implement the course based on the findings of this study.
Teachers can review the perceived findings of this study to examine their roles as facilitators of the study skills course to enhance the academic achievement of American students.

Continued student participation in this course can provide more information about how students perceive the effectiveness of a study skills course and how teachers and administrators can enhance the effectiveness of the course for African American student achievement.

Implications for Theory

This study examined the effects of a study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on the academic achievement of African American freshmen at a dedicated academic magnet high school in the South. The goal theory (Miller, Behrens, & Greene, 1993) was used to examine the impact of a self-regulatory activity, enrollment in “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on African American student achievement.

Based on the responses in this study, twelve of the fifteen student participants who completed the study skills course perceived to have met the goals that they had set for enrolling in the course. These goals are discussed below.

In research question 1, student participants were asked: What influenced African American students to enroll in the study skills course? Each student replied. Some of the students gave several reasons for enrolling in the course, such as: the course was an elective; parents or the guidance counselor made recommendations to take the course; there was a need to learn study skills; the course was required; or some chose to take the course.
• Four student participants, SP2, SP5, SP10, and SP15 reported that they wanted to learn how to study. Two of the four student participants, SP5 and SP15, reported that they accomplished that task in research question 2.

• One student participant, SP6, reported that she wanted to improve her study habits. SP6 reported that she perceived to have accomplished that goal from her reported responses in research question 2.

• Three student participants, SP1, SP7, and SP14, reported that they wanted to learn effective test taking strategies. SP1 and SP7 reported that they perceived to have accomplished that goal from their responses indicated in research question 2.

• Six student participants, SP1, SP8, SP4, SP6, SP9, and SP12 reported that they were influenced to take the study skills course from recommendations of parents or the guidance counselor. All of these students enrolled and completed the study skills course.

• Five student participants, SP1, SP3, SP8, SP9, SP13, reported that they enrolled in the study skills course because it was an elective course. They needed this course to fulfill their course requirements. All five of these student participants accomplished this goal by successfully completing the study skills course.

• Two students, SP5 and SP15, reported that they chose to take the study skills course. SP5 reported that she wanted to improve her study habits. SP15 reported that she wanted to learn how to study. SP15 reported that she learned how to study from her response to research question 2.
• One student, SP11, reported that she enrolled in the study skills course because it was required. She successfully completed the course.

These findings indicate that twelve out of fifteen students perceived to have accomplished their goals by engaging in a self-regulatory activity, the study skills course, to help them achieve their goals by receiving credit for completing the course as an elective and course of choice; successfully passing a course that was recommended by parents and the guidance counselor, learning study skills, and fulfilling a course requirement. These findings support the goal theory (Miller, Behrens, & Greene, 1993).
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APPENDIX A

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction: Good morning/afternoon. My name is Josephine Allen. I am a student at Louisiana State University. I am conducting research about the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study.” This interview is aimed at determining your perception of the effectiveness of the “Dynamics of Effective Study” course. Please feel free to provide detailed information about questions asked. You may provide additional information that you think is important to you that is not covered during the interview. You are not required to identify yourself.

(1) What influenced you to attend a dedicated academic magnet high school? Please give details.

(2) What do you remember about the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study?” Please give details.

(3) What influenced you to take the study skills course? Please give details.

(4) What specific strategies have you learned from the study skills course? Please give details.

(5) What factors have contributed to your success at this dedicated academic magnet high school? Please give details.
(6) What factors have been obstacles to your success at this dedicated academic magnet high school? Please give details.

(7) Explain how you prepare for your quizzes and tests. Please give details.

(8) Explain what you do in classes in which the teacher lectures. Please give details.

(9) Explain your process in learning new information. Please give details.

(10) Describe your weekly activities for preparing for school, including the weekend. Please give details.

(11) Explain your process for studying, including the amount of time you study weekly. Please give details.
(12) What do you do when you are introduced to unfamiliar concepts? Please give details.

(13) How do you display information that has lots of information or is difficult to understand with words? Please give details.

(14) What makes you succeed at this dedicated academic magnet high school? Please give details.

(15) What do you do to develop critical thinking skills? Please give details.

(16) What do you do to comprehend information? Please give details.

(17) How do you prepare for reports and writing assignments? Please give details.
(18) How has the study skills course affected your academic achievement? Please give details.

(19) Would you recommend other students to take the study skills course? Please give details.

(20) Please express any additional information that you wish to express about your experiences at this dedicated academic magnet high school.

Thank you for your participation.
APPENDIX B

TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction: Good morning/afternoon. My name is Josephine Allen. I am a student at Louisiana State University. I am conducting research about the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study Skills.” This interview is aimed at determining the perception of effectiveness of the “Dynamics of Effective Study,” course. Please feel free to provide detailed information about the questions asked. You may provide additional information that you think is important to you that is not covered during the interview. You are not required to identify yourself.

(1) How long have you been in the teaching/administrative profession/position?
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(2) From your observations, describe the school experience for African American students.
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(3) From your observations, describe the school experience for non-African American students.
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(4) What factors do you feel contribute to the academic achievement of African American students at this dedicated academic magnet high school?
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(5) What factors do you feel have been obstacles to the academic achievement of African American students at this dedicated academic magnet high school?
(6) What factors do you feel contribute to the academic achievement of non-African American students at this dedicated academic magnet high school?

(7) What factors do you feel have been obstacles to the academic achievement of non-African American students at this dedicated academic magnet high school?

(8) Why do you think African American students enrolled in the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study?”

(9) What specific study skills strategies have you observed that African American students use in classes? Please give details.

(10) How did the study skills course affect the academic achievement of African American students?
(11) Do you think having a study skills course at this dedicated academic magnet high school is effective for African American students? Please give details.

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(12) What changes, if any, are needed to make the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” more effective?

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(13) Should the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” remain in the curriculum? Why? Why not?

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(14) Please express any additional information that you wish to express about your experiences at this dedicated academic magnet high school.

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Thank you for your participation.
APPENDIX C

LETTERS OF CONSENT

To:     Mr. John Doe, Superintendent
        111 Anywhere Street
        Southeast, LA  70806

From:  Josephine A. Allen, Ph.D. Student
        Louisiana State University
        Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

I am pursuing a doctoral degree at Louisiana State University in the Department of Education, Leadership, Research, and Counseling. My study is on the effects of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school. This study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the course on the academic achievement and retention rate of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school.

I am asking permission to collect data on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and grades of African American students who enrolled at Baton Rouge Magnet High School from 1994 through 2001. I also need permission to conduct interviews with teachers, administrators, and African American students about the study skills course at a dedicated academic magnet high school during the spring of the 2002-2003 school year to adhere to the timeline of my program.

All data will be conducted in a confidential matter. Information will be coded to protect the privacy of all student participants. If you approve, please sign the attached consent form and return it to me at the above address.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration for this request.

Sincerely,

Josephine A. Allen
**CONSENT FORM**

**Study Title:** The Effects of a Study Skills Course, “Dynamics of Effective Study Skills,” on the Academic Achievement of American Students at a Dedicated Academic Magnet High School

**Performance Site:** Dedicated Academic Magnet High School

**Investigator:** The following investigator is available for questions, M-F, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Josephine A. Allen  
Doctoral Student, LSU  
(225) 383-8660

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the study is to examine the effectiveness of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study Skills,” on the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school.

**Subject Inclusion:** African American students, teachers, and administrators at a dedicated academic magnet high school will be included in the study.

**Number of Subjects:** 30 African American students, 5 teachers who taught study skills, and 3 administrators will be included in the study.

**Study Procedures:** The study will be conducted in two phases. In the first phase, data will be collected on the entrance requirements for freshmen and high school GPAs of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school. In the second phase interviews will be conducted to determine the student participants’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the study skills course.

**Benefits:** The study will provide information on how the study skills course affected the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school.

**Risks:** There are no known risks.

**Privacy:** Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is
required by law.

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects’ rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator’s obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Signature____________________________________________ Date __________
APPENDIX D

LETTERS OF CONSENT

To: Principal
1111 Anywhere Street
Southeast, LA 70806

From: Josephine A. Allen, Ph.D. Student
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

I have received permission from the Superintendent to collect data for a dissertation study at Louisiana State University. Enclosed is a copy of the consent form granting me permission to proceed. I have attached a consent form describing the study. Your participation in this study is voluntarily. If you agree to participate in this study, your signature is needed on the consent form. I would like to meet with you to discuss the steps we need to proceed with the data collection.

I have completed all of my course work in my Ph.D. program in the Department of Education Leadership, Research and Counseling at Louisiana State University. I have successfully defended my research proposal and have been approved by the Internal Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Louisiana State University to continue with my research. The IRB reviews studies that occur in school settings.

Your approval is needed before I can proceed. Your cooperation in this research is appreciated.
CONSENT FORM

Study Title: The Effects of a Study Skills Course, “Dynamics of Effective Study Skills,” on the Academic Achievement of American Students at a Dedicated Academic Magnet High School

Performance Site: Dedicated Academic Magnet High School

Investigator: The following investigator is available for questions, M-F, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Josephine A. Allen
Doctoral Student, LSU
(225) 383-8660

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to examine the effectiveness of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study Skills,” on the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school.

Subject Inclusion: African American students, teachers, and administrators at a dedicated academic magnet high school will be included in the study.

Number of Subjects: 30 African American students, 5 teachers who taught study skills, and 3 administrators will be included in the study.

Study Procedures: The study will be conducted in two phases. In the first phase, data will be collected on the entrance requirements for freshmen and high school GPAs of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school. In the second phase interviews will be conducted to determine the student participants’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the study skills course.

Benefits: The study will provide information on how the study skills course affected the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school.

Risks: There are no known risks.

Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is
required by law.

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects’ rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator’s obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Signature____________________________________________ Date __________
APPENDIX E

PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

Project Title: The Effects of a Study Skills Course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on the Academic Achievement of African American Students at a Dedicated Academic Magnet High School

Performance Site: Dedicated Academic Magnet High School

Investigator: The following investigator is available for questions, M-F, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Josephine A. Allen
Doctoral Student, LSU
(225) 383-8660

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to examine the effectiveness of the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” on the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school.

Inclusion Criteria: African American students who are enrolled at a dedicated academic magnet high school are included in the study.

Exclusion Criteria: Non-African American Students at a dedicated academic magnet high school will not be included in this study.

Description of the Study: Perceptions of the student participants in the study skills course will be examined to determine their evaluations of the effectiveness of the study skills course.

Fifteen African American students who completed the study skills course and fifteen African American students who did not take or complete the study skills course will be interviewed. The purpose of the interviews is to determine their perceptions of effectiveness of the study skills course. All student participants will be provided confidentiality. The interviews will be coded. Codes will consist of numbers instead of names. The numbers will begin with “1” and continue in numerical order. Names will not be used in the study.

Benefits: This study will provide information on how to enhance the academic achievement of African American students at a dedicated academic magnet high school.
Risks: There are no known risks.

Right to Refuse: Participation is voluntary. A student will participate only if the student and parent agree. At any time the student may withdraw from the study. At any time the parent of the student may withdraw the student from the study.

Privacy: The school records of the student participants in this study may be reviewed by the investigator. Results of this study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included for publication.

Financial Information: There is no cost to participate in this study. There is no compensation for participating in this study.

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects’ rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692. I will allow my child to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator’s obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Parent’s Signature __________________________ Date __________

The parent/guardian has indicated to me that he/she is unable to read. I certify that I have read this consent form to the parent/guardian and explained that by completing the signature line above he/she has given permission for the child to participate in the study.

Signature of Reader __________________________ Date __________
APPENDIX F

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS’ CHARACTERISTICS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Class</th>
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<th>Entrance Reading Stanine</th>
<th>Entrance GPA</th>
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### APPENDIX G

**STUDENT NON-PARTICIPANTS’ CHARACTERISTICS**

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APPENDIX H

FORMER STUDY SKILLS TEACHERS’ CHARACTERISTICS

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APPENDIX I

ADMINISTRATORS’ CHARACTERISTICS

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<tr>
<td>A3</td>
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</table>
Student Participant 1: SP1.

Student participant 1 is a female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school who took the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” because her parents influenced her to take it. She stated that she learned test taking and note-taking skills from the course. She recommended other students to take the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” so that they could learn how to take notes, prepare for tests and learn organizational skills.

Student Participant 2: SP2.

Student participant 2 is a female who is a senior at another school other than a dedicated academic magnet high school who chose to take the study skills course to improve her GPA. She indicated that she learned how to study and improve her reading comprehension. She recommended the study skills course to students who do not know how to study.

Student Participant 3: SP3.

Student participant 3 is a female who is a senior at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She took the study skills course because it was the only elective available for her to take. She stated that she learned reading and comprehension skills, time management, and study techniques. She felt that the course enhanced her academic achievement. She recommended other students to take the study skills course to learn comprehension skills.
**Student Participant 4: SP4.**

Student participant 4 is an African American male who is a senior at a dedicated academic magnet high school. He took the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” because his mother wanted him to take the course. He stated that he excels academically when he uses the skills from the study skills course. Study skills learned in the study skills course were outlining and reading skills. He recommended other students to take the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” so that they could develop good study habits.

**Student Participant 5: SP5.**

Student participant 5 is an African American female who is a senior at a dedicated magnet high school. She chose to take the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study.” Participant 5 felt that the study skills course helped her improve her GPA. Study skills learned in the study skills course were methods on how to study, spell, read, write, and use correct grammar. She stated that the study skills course, Dynamics of Effective Study,” should be a mandatory course for all ninth grade students so that they could learn how to manage their time to meet the academic challenges of high school.

**Student Participant 6: SP6.**

Student participant 6 is an African American female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She took the study skill course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” because she wanted to achieve academically for her mother. She expressed that the study skills course helped her improve her GPA. She learned how to take effective notes. She recommended other students to take the study skills course to learn how to outline information, become better listeners, and improve their GPAs.
Student Participant 7: SP7.

Student participant 7 is an African American female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She chose to take the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” so that she could learn test taking skills. Study skills learned in the course were note-taking skills, test taking skills, and methods on how to study. She recommended other students to take the study skills course to learn test taking skills and methods on how to study.

Student Participant 8: SP8.

Student participant 8 is an African American female who is a senior at a dedicated academic magnet high school. The guidance counselor scheduled the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” for her. She does not feel that the study skills course impacted her GPA. Study skills learned were note-taking skills and logic skills. She recommended other students to take the study skills course if they need help in learning how to study.

Student Participant 9: SP9.

Student participant 9 is a female who is a senior at a dedicated academic magnet high school. Her mother enrolled her in the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study.” She recommended other student to take the study skills course to learn study skills to enhance their academic achievement.

Student Participant 10: SP10.

Student participant 10 is an African American sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She chose to enroll in the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” because she needed to learn how to study. Study skills learned were
logic and time management skills. She recommended other students to take the study skills course to learn time management skills.

**Student Participant 11: SP11.**

Student participant 11 is an African American female who is a sophomore at a school in Southwest Louisiana that is not a dedicated academic magnet high school. She enrolled in the study skills course because it was a required course. She indicated that the study skills course enhanced her academic achievement. Study skills learned were reading skills, writing skills, test taking skills, and time management. She recommended other students to take the study skills course to learn how to study, take tests, and manage stress.

**Student Participant 12: SP12.**

Student participant 12 is an African American female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. Her mother enrolled her in the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study.” The study skills course has helped her maintained her GPA criterion. Study skills learned were graphing skills, outlining skills, note taking skills, and comprehension skills.

**Student Participant 13: SP13.**

Student participant 13 is an African American female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She enrolled in the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” because it was a required elective. The study skills course helped her maintain her GPA criterion. Study skills learned were methods on how to study, note taking skills, comprehension skills, and memorization skills. She
recommended other students to take the study skills course to learn how to read, comprehend and outline information.

**Student Participant 14: SP14.**

Student participant 14 is an African American male who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. He chose to take the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” to learn test taking skills and study skills. He stated that he learned how to study effectively and improved his GPA from the strategies learned from the study skills course. Study skills learned were methods on how to study, note-taking skills, and test taking skills. He recommended other students to take the study skills course to learn how to study.

**Student Participant 15: SP15.**

Student participant 15 is an African American female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She enrolled in the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” to learn how to study, take notes, and improve her listening skills. Skills learned from the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” were methods on how to study, test taking skills, note-taking skills, and comprehension skills. She recommended other students to take the study skills course to learn study skills.

**Student Non-participant 1: NP1.**

Student non-participant 1 is a female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She recommended students to take the study skills course so that they could learn how to study.
Student Non-participant 2: NP2.

Student non-participant 2 is a female who is a senior at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She recommended other students to take the study skills course so that they could learn how to study and use note cards.

Student Non-participant 3: NP3.

Student non-participant 3 is a female who is a senior at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She recommended other students to take the study skills course so that they could learn study skills that could help them achieve in high school.

Student Non-participant 4: NP4.

Student non-participant 4 is a male who is a senior at a dedicated academic magnet high school. He was influenced to attend this school by his parents and friends.

Student Non-participant 5: NP5.

Student non-participant 5 is female who is a senior at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She recommended students to take the study skills course so that they could learn how to study, comprehend information, and improve their GPAs.

Student Participant 6: NP6.

Student non-participant 6 is a female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She chose to attend this school because it is an academically challenging school. Her goal is to attend college.

Student Non-participant 7: NP7.

Student non-participant 7 is a female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She recommended other students to take the study skills course so that they could learn how to study.
Student Non-participant 8: NP8.

Student non-participant 8 is a female who is a senior at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She attended this school because of the arts program. She is enrolled in the talented drama program. Student non-participants #8 is a dancer. She likes the diversity of the student population.

Student Non-participant 9: NP9.

Student non-participant 9 is a female who is a senior at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She recommended students to take the study skills course, “Dynamics of Effective Study,” if they needed study skills to help them achieve academically.

Student Non-participant 10: NP10.

Student non-participant 10 is a female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She recommended students to take the study skills course so that they could improve their study skills, GPAs, and study habits.

Student Non-participant 11: NP11.

Student non-participant 11 is a female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. Her father influenced her to attend this school. Maintaining the required GPA criterion is a challenge for her. She had never had to achieve at this level before attending this school. Implementing study skills enhances her GPA.

Student Non-participant 12: NP12.

Student non-participant 12 is a female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She recommended students to take the study skills course so that they could apply the skills that are taught in the course.

Student non-participant 13 is a female sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She recommended students to take the study skills course if they don’t know how to study and comprehend information.

Student Non-participant 14: NP14.

Student non-participant 14 is a male who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. He recommended students to take the study skills course so that they could learn how to study.

Student Non-participant 15: NP15.

Student non-participant 15 is a female who is a sophomore at a dedicated academic magnet high school. She attended this school because her brother graduated from this school. She also wanted to attend this school because of the music and arts programs School. She indicated that it was a “wonderful school” to get a good education.

Teacher 1: T1.

Teacher 1 is an African American female who has taught study skills and English courses, and has been a dean of students during her twenty-seven years in the educational profession.

Teacher 2: T2.

Teacher 2 is a Caucasian female who has taught the study skills course. She has been an elementary counselor, middle school counselor, and a high school counselor.

Teacher 3: T3.

Teacher 3 is a Caucasian female who has taught school for eight years. She has taught at this dedicated academic magnet high school for five years.
Teacher 4: T4.

Teacher 4 is a Caucasian female who has been a teacher for seventeen years. She enjoys being with the students at this dedicated academic magnet high school.

Teacher 5: T5.

Teacher 5 is a Caucasian female who has taught school for two years at this dedicated academic magnet high school. She has taught African American literature and English courses along with the study skills course.

Administrator 1: A1.

Administrator 1 is an African American female who has been an administrator for twelve years. She taught school for twenty-one years.

Administrator 2: A2.

Administrator 2 is a Caucasian female who has been an administrator for six years. She taught school for seventeen years.

Administrator 3: A3.

Administrator 3 is a Caucasian female who has been an administrator for eight years. She taught school for eleven years.
VITA

Josephine Ann Allen graduated from Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana, in 1976 with a bachelor of science degree in education. She majored in mathematics and minored in general science. In 1988, she received a master of education degree in administration and supervision from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In 1990, Josephine received thirty hours above the master’s level in education in administration, supervision, and advanced mathematics.
